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THE

Untamed Balkans

Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
Streams like the thunder storm AGAINST *the wind.*
Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
The loudest still the tempest leaves behind;
Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,
Chopped by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
But the sap lasts, and still the seed we find
Sown deep, even in the bosom of the north;
So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.

—BYRON, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV

THE Untamed Balkans

FREDERIC W. L. KOVACS

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MAPS AND ENDPAPER DESIGN
BY KURT WERTH

(BMG · UOPWA 18)

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. BY H. WOLFF, NEW YORK

To the soldiers of the great
underground army in the
Nazi-occupied countries—
Germany included—to the
victors of tomorrow.

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PART I

The Debacle

CHAPTER I

TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS OF BLITZ HISTORY

"It is better to weep with the wise than to sing with fools; it is better to fight with a hero than to kiss a coward."

—OLD SERBIAN SAYING

The March sun, bright but without heat, shines on the old Turkish castle of Belgrade, the Kalamegdan. It shines on the steel-colored Danube and the white Sava, on the narrow streets and small squares of the Belgrade suburb, Gospodavka Mehana.

There is unusual movement in the streets. People are hurrying, all in one direction, gesticulating, shouting, laughing—angrily and yet with relief.

The flow of people stops. The street is jammed. Those behind try to look over the heads of those in front. Impatiently they cry, "Let us see the chicken."

Those who are close enough to the poultry shop in

front of which the crowd is massing, see a chicken hanging by its neck from the cross-bar over the door. On its breast is a sign inscribed in large letters:

I prefer to be dead, hanging here, than in Hitler's soup like the Gypsy.

"The Gypsy" is the nickname of Dragisha Cvetkovitch, head of the Yugoslav Government, just returned from Vienna, after signing the pact which has tied Yugoslavia to the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis and given Nazis the right to send hospital and supply trains through Yugoslav territory against the Greeks. He has surrendered the whole Yugoslav economy to the Reich.

There are more such placarded chickens in Belgrade on this twenty-sixth of March 1941. The police have their hands full removing them and dispersing the gathering crowds of angry Belgrade citizens and of peasants who have flocked into the town, all shouting, "Down with the Gypsy!" and booing whenever one of the numerous cars with German license plates and small swastika flags passes by.

In the evening the crowds grow larger. They march up and down the main streets of Belgrade, singing the old Serbian songs of defiance which were sung in the times of struggle against the Turks, and later in those against the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns.

The window pane of the German Lufthansa offices suddenly crashes, shattered by stones. Gendarmes, bayonets affixed to their rifles, reinforce the police detachment guarding the German Legation. Here and there

speakers emerge from the growing crowds. Their slogans, "The people will not allow this treason!" "Down with the pact!" "Down with the Government!" are passionately cheered.

Reservists are acclaimed. Officers receive flowers from the women. The song of the Komitadjis, *Spremite sa, spremite Tchetnitse!* ("Prepare, prepare, Komitadji fighters!"), resounds in every street. A demonstration led by hundreds of students gathers before the Ministry of War. The cry is, "We want the Army to throw out the Ministers!"

COUP AT MIDNIGHT

In the night, tanks and machine-gun crews on trucks suddenly emerge from the Topchider barracks and proceed to the center of Belgrade. Air force officers in marine-blue uniforms enter the homes of Prime Minister Cvetkovitch, Foreign Minister Cincar-Markovitch, and other high-ranking officials known for their adherence to the Vienna Pact. The guards do not hinder the intruders. Nor do the Ministers protest when the officers declare that the Government has ceased to exist and that Air Force Commander General Dushan Simovitch is forming a new Cabinet.

At the same time General Simovitch and his friend General Boro Mirkovitch enter the royal palace with Prince Regent Paul's resignation and young King Peter's first manifesto already prepared. Prince Paul, very pale,

signs immediately. No doubt, he recalls the story of that night in 1903 when King Alexander Obrenovitch and Queen Draga were assassinated by patriotic officers.

By dawn the crowds reassembling in the streets hear the news: Prince Regent Paul is out, King Peter is in, and Air Force Commander General Simovitch has taken over the premiership. Huge masses of people stream to the palace. Swastika flags are torn from the buildings of the Wiener Bankverein and the German-Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce. The Swedish Minister, mistaken for a Nazi official, is seriously injured. At the British Legation champagne is served.

The Cvetkovitch Government has been driven off. Honor has been saved. But when the new Government meets under the presidency of General Simovitch, there is little doubt about the imminent danger in which the country stands. First, there is the threat of a German invasion with overwhelming force and equipment. One of the first acts of the new Government is therefore to inform the German Minister that all open treaties signed by previous governments will be honored by it.

There are serious threats from within too. Maintaining itself through terror and corruption, the dictatorial regime for years has aroused and fed the hatred of the national minorities—Croats, Moslem Bosnians, Macedonians, and Slovenes. It has fostered native fascist groups, and has decimated the forces of their anti-fascist opponents. The consequences of this policy, the fact that members of the new Government have never openly

disapproved it, have even participated in it, weaken the nation's powers of resistance in its decisive hour. Looking back now, we can see in Yugoslavia at the end of March 1941 germs of disaster similar to those that had caused the fall of France a year before.

But it is still that exciting day of March 28, 1941. This day nobody goes to work. People dance in the public squares. Bands blare forth over and over *Spremite sa, spremite Tchetnitse!*

Where have we witnessed similar scenes? Where have we heard like cries and songs in a kindred Slavic tongue? Memories revive of the great demonstrations in Prague a week before the Munich tragedy. There too a general, Chief Army Inspector Syrovy, took over the premiership only to capitulate one week later.

But who in the streets of Belgrade and the other towns of Serbia, Crna Gora, and occasionally also in Croatia, cheering the news of the ousting of the Prince Regent and the Cvetkovitch Government, remembers the sad story of Czechoslovakian capitulation? Who foresees the possibility of a catastrophe which will come with equal rapidity?

BATTLE FOR TIME

While the special train carrying Prince Regent Paul, who had resigned in favor of seventeen-year-old King Peter, rolled southward, and while other trains packed with German and Italian citizens headed northward, the

new Government met to struggle with a variety of problems, each worthy of all its energy. There were the negotiations with Rome and Berlin to be conducted. An attempt had to be made to win time to prepare defenses against an invasion which foreign military experts, watching the swift deterioration of Yugoslav-German diplomatic relations and the activity of the German army, expected in from fifteen to twenty-five days. Diplomatic negotiations with the British and the Soviets had to be placed on a new footing. The problem of creating a plan of defense and effectuating mobilization—called "activization" in order not to antagonize the Nazis still more—had to be solved. Above all, the question of forestalling internal dissension and disruption had to be tackled.

The time was very short. As the days wore on, diplomatic and military experts shortened their estimates of the span of time prior to an invasion. On March 31, the German Minister, von Heeren, was suddenly recalled. Heavy concentrations were almost immediately moved up to the Yugoslav frontiers in Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and Southern Austria by the Nazi Army Command. The Nazi press and radio unleashed their most violent campaign since the days preceding the attack on Czechoslovakia in September 1938. On April 8, Hungary's Prime Minister, Count Teleki, committed suicide; the reasons were generally sought in his opposition to the Nazi demand that Hungary be used as a base for an attack on Yugoslavia.

An attempt was made to strengthen Yugoslav morale

and defense capacity by declaring an amnesty and opening concentration camps and prisons for a number of anti-fascist political prisoners. But it came too late and was too little.

Frantic efforts were made to prevent the Axis from using Croat and Slovene "irredentism" as a weapon of disruption. Dr. Matchek, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, was accordingly named Vice-Premier, but it took five days of negotiations and bargaining before he agreed to take the post.

Matchek had been Vice-Premier in the overthrown Cvetkovitch Government which had signed the pact with the Axis. He had been one of the staunchest supporters of the pact in that government, but he was not a fascist. He was a half-hearted liberal fluctuating in his sympathies, emotions, and decisions. He was embittered by twenty years of Belgrade's arbitrary actions and violations of law and promises with respect to the Croatians. He feared the competition of Ante Pavelitch and his fascist Croatian group who had been collaborating openly with Rome and Berlin, and he was afraid lest in the event of armed conflict Croatia, as a direct neighbor of the Reich, be overrun first and become a general battleground. So he hesitated to join the new Government, and, when he did, the spirit of appeasement entered with him.

The head of the Government, Air Force Commander General Simovitch, was quite well aware of the weakness of Yugoslavia's military power. The manpower was ex-

cellent but the equipment poor. Above all, army headquarters, disorganized by the preceding governments of "collaboration with Greater Germany," had neither carried forward preparations, nor developed a strategy for defense under the new circumstances.

In the last weeks of 1940, when Italian planes had mistakenly bombed the city of Bitolj, General Neditch, then Minister of War and Army Chief, had called for immediate action. He had insisted that now was the time for Yugoslavia to join the Greeks in an attack to drive the Italians from Albania. The majority of the Government and Prince Regent Paul had opposed General Neditch's views. General Simovitch had immediately approached Neditch and proposed a coup similar to the one which he later undertook on March 27, but Neditch had declined and instead resigned as Minister of War.

His successor, Petchitch, was an old retired officer, entirely subservient to the pro-Nazi policy of the Prince Regent and Prime Minister Cvetkovitch. Petchitch accordingly had done nothing to prepare the defense of the country against an Axis invasion along a possible last defense line in the rugged mountain regions of Southern Dalmatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Central Serbia, and Macedonia.

PLAN FOR RESISTANCE

Despite the heaviest military odds, General Simovitch and his hastily reorganized general staff were certain

that they could considerably slow up a German-Italian push and so make a decisive stand after the first weeks of inevitable retreat. This was the plan of resistance, as it was explained to an American correspondent by a high Yugoslav officer:

Yugoslavia has almost 1,500,000 men under arms. They are distributed in the six army zones, with the bulk of the best troops and equipment concentrated in Central and South Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia.

"We expect to lose all this," a Montenegrin officer told this correspondent, as he stood before the map and swept his hand across Slovenia and Croatia. "And that almost immediately," he added, slicing a finger across North and Central Serbia, including Novi Sad and Belgrade with a flick of his finger nail. "This, too, will go in a few weeks," he stressed, figuratively pushing Southeastern Serbia and a strip of Northeastern Macedonia behind the German lines with the back of his hand. "But here"—drawing a long line down the map across Montenegro, Albania, and a strip of South Central Serbia and Macedonia—"here we stand!

"The Italians? The moment Germany attacks us, we drive into Albania from here"—he drew his finger from Prizren into Northern Albania—" and from here"—and he dug his thumb into Scutari in Albania upon the Montenegrin frontier. "Unless they surrender, we will drive them into the sea, and this will be no Dunkerque." [1]

What the Montenegrin officer told the American correspondent seems to represent the general idea of the Yugoslav and Allied plan of resistance for the campaign

[1] Ray Brock in the New York *Times*, April 6, 1941.

in Yugoslavia. The one-thousand-mile Yugoslav border with Germany, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria is flat or rolling country for the most part. There are but small obstacles to stand in the path of motorized divisions. The southeast corner, however, where Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria meet, is a rugged forbidding country, exceedingly rich in natural defense positions. The Yugoslavs, and likewise the British and Greeks, expected the Germans to sweep through the northern two-thirds of Yugoslavia, but they reckoned that the Yugoslav Army, aided by British reinforcements, could hold the south in the mountains.

PANZER PINCERS—STAB IN THE BACK

The German High Command thwarted these expectations by crushing the most difficult part of the Yugoslav lines first. It was a bloody irony of fate that the general commanding the southernmost Yugoslav Army District was General Neditch—the man who had wanted to join the Greeks in their attack in December 1940 and was then dismissed. Because of the assumption that the main German thrust would come from the northwest, north, and northeast, General Neditch's southern army was denied reinforcements of artillery and mechanized equipment. The surprise attack of German panzer divisions over the almost impassable mountain ranges into the Vardar Valley and Bitolj Gap found General Neditch's forces materially and strategically unprepared.

This failure in the south was matched by similar failures on the other fronts. The offensive against the Italians in Albania was timidly undertaken with pitifully inadequate forces. Scutari was taken only in the reports—in reality the Italians in Southern Albania had no need to fear for their rear. With little effort they stopped the Serbian offensive on the second day.

In Slovenia and Croatia about 35,000 deserters joined the invading Nazi and Italian troops. Mutinies broke out in a number of Yugoslav garrisons. Croatian soldiers disarmed and arrested Serbian officers and proclaimed Croation secession from the Yugoslav State.

On the third day of the war, April 8, the first clashes between Croatian and Serbian troops occurred in Belovar, Croatia, and Split, Dalmatia. In Belovar, a Croatian sergeant took command of the 180th Infantry Regiment. During the night he had the Serbian officers interned. The majority of the Serbian soldiers of the regiment, stationed outside the town, attacked the barracks at dawn. A fight followed and was decided in favor of the Croatians by the rapid arrival of German parachute and motorized troops.

Six Yugoslav warships were stationed in the port of Split. Three of them hoisted the flag of the independent Croatian State; thereupon the other three threatened to shell the town. This dispute was likewise settled in favor of the Croatian mutineers by the timely arrival of Nazi Stukas.

In Zagreb, Lubljana, and other cities, Croat Guards in

the dark olive-drab uniforms of the Ustashi—a terrorist organization under the leadership of Ante Pavelitch, drilled and equipped mostly by Italy—made their appearance immediately after the first vanguard troops of the Axis armies.

In Bosnia the Moslem population turned against the Serbs, the poor peasants having been mercilessly cheated by a Belgrade Government looking for the favor of the rich Begs,[1] and the Begs preferring the more powerful Nazis to the less powerful masters of Belgrade.

In Macedonia large bands of the IMRO, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, went into action. They cut power, telephone, and telegraph wires, and committed other acts of sabotage. A whispering campaign, generating fear and confusion, completed the disaster after the initial shock of armored columns, supported by bombers and parachutists, had paralyzed Yugoslav centers of resistance.

Yugoslav army units, misinformed about the situation, had no means of getting in touch with one another. They heard only that "the Germans are but a few miles away." Important strategic positions were evacuated by the military many hours and sometimes a whole day before any German columns were near. Difficult passes were left undefended; bridges were not blown up. The passes where all-important mountain roads could have been cut—Katchanik, in Central Serbia, and Bobuna in South-

[1] "Beg" is the old Turkish name for "squire."

ern Serbia—were left to the enemy without, or with insufficient, resistance.

The Nazi invasion began without declaration of war or previous notice, on Saturday, April 5. It was not, however, unexpected. The Yugoslav Government could have made all necessary preparations for an orderly evacuation of its main departments, but nothing was prepared. The Foreign Office, for instance, fled in complete disorder and never re-established itself during the whole campaign. The General Staff and the Government had no connection with each other for six days. The Ministry of the Interior left the provincial authorities without instructions. In Zagreb the Governor of Croatia, Dr. Ivan Shubachitch, turned the police over to an officer known to be in sympathy with Ante Pavelitch, and then left the city. Police headquarters immediately hoisted the flag of the "Independent Croatian State" and got in touch by wireless with Ante Pavelitch, Axis-named chief of the new State.

In the general disorder and headlessness Colonel Bonfatti, Military Attaché of the Italian Embassy, and Major Fabricius, head of the Nazi organization in Yugoslavia, and a relative of Ribbentrop, remained unmolested. When the German Panzers rolled into Belgrade, these two emerged, together with Neuhausen, the German Consul General,[1] who had served as a link between the

[1] Neuhausen was the director of the Belgrade office of the Viennese bank Wiener Bankverein and disposed of very considerable funds which were used to subsidize different native fascist groups, such as the Blue Shirts of former Premier Stoyadinovitch.

Yugoslav fascist organizations and the Brown House in Munich. They had kept contact with members of the overthrown Cvetkovitch Government and drafted the capitulation finally signed by Cincar-Markovitch—former Foreign Minister and one of the Yugoslav delegates at the Vienna signing of the Axis Pact—and General Yankovitch, Military Governor of Belgrade.

Military events rolled up with blitzkrieg speed. On April 5, the first bombs fell on Belgrade, and the first panzer units crossed the frontiers. On April 6, Belgrade was a sea of flames, with six thousand killed and wounded. In the south panzer divisions neared Skoplje, strategic center in the Vardar Valley. The next day Skoplje fell. On the ninth, an armored column approached the Albanian frontier, where the Italians waited for support. By April 11, Nazis and Italians had met at the Albanian frontier, the Axis armies had swept over Slovenia and Croatia. Belgrade, Nish, and Kragujevatch, center of the Yugoslav armament industry, had been taken, and armored columns had sliced off the remainder of Yugoslavia.

COLLAPSE

On the seventeenth, twelve days after the beginning of the campaign, the German High Command announced the cessation of all organized Yugoslav resistance. The General Staff of the Yugoslav Army capitulated at Sara-

jevo. The remnants of the Government fled in airplanes to Greece and to Palestine.

In towns not yet occupied by the Axis troops battered Yugoslav detachments gathered for the last time and laid down their arms to await the arrival of the Germans and Italians. Other thousands of soldiers from the disbanded Yugoslav Army, however, took their guns, ammunition, and equipment and trekked into the mountains. Their officers made no effort to stop them. Since then, small bands of Komitadjis and lone sharp-shooters have taken up guerrilla warfare. Centers of resistance and sabotage will continue to operate from the "underground" of these mountains, but technically Yugoslavia's war with the Axis is over.

CHAPTER 2

BREAK-THROUGH AT THERMOPYLAE

"The High Command of the Greek Army in Epirus and Macedonia, represented by General Tsalakoglou, turns to the Italian High Command of armed forces in Albania and the High Command of German forces in Greece, to ask that unconditional surrender of the Greek Army in Epirus and Macedonia be accepted.

"The Italian High Command in Albania, and the High Command of German troops in Greece, accept this surrender without condition. Men of the Greek army of Epirus and Macedonia are prisoners of war. In consideration of the courage shown by Greek troops on the battlefield, and the fact that in this way they saved their military honor, Greek officers may keep their sidearms and uniform distinctions."

—ARTICLES I AND II OF THE TERMS OF SURRENDER, SIGNED AT SALONICA, APRIL 23, 1941

Simultaneously with the invasion of Yugoslavia the German armies based on Bulgaria struck at Greece, which since October 28, 1940, had been successfully re-

sisting Italian attacks and had even succeeded in administering severe defeats to the legions of Mussolini in Albania.

MUSSOLINI'S PET WAR

The Italo-Greek War had started with a thrust forward of what was called Mussolini's picked "army of fascist victory" all along the Albanian frontier. But as early as mid-November the Italian offensive directed at Yanina first got stuck and then turned into retreat and flight. The Greek troops, though under-equipped and outnumbered, answered the Italian attack on Yanina with a counter-drive from Florina to the important Albanian base of Koritza. In the steep valleys of the Pindus Mountains, Greek mountain artillery and Evzones won a brilliant victory, smashing the Duce's Third Alpine Division and capturing hundreds of prisoners and the eagles and flags of the proud "Indomitable Blackshirt Brigade." By the first days of December, Greek territory had been cleansed of the Italian invaders, and the vanguards of the Greek armies were carrying the war to Albanian soil.

All the military shortcomings of the economically weaker and morally almost exhausted junior Axis partner had become evident in this campaign. No Italian "victory march" into Epirus after the final collapse of the Greek armies before the German panzer divisions, no triumphant war bulletins about the Greek surrender "to the

Italian Command in Albania," could transform the shameful defeat of Mussolini's armies in his own "pet war" into a victory. And the wounds administered to the fascist military power by an outnumbered and outmachined enemy may well prove to be incurable despite all the victory parades of today.

The Greek Army, considered by all military experts to be among the most ill-equipped even of the armies of the Balkan nations, fought gallantly against the black-shirted giant with feet of clay. Knowledge of the low morale on the other side, coupled with familiarity with the rugged terrain and desperate determination to defend their native soil, enabled the Greeks to wage successful war throughout the winter of 1940-41. But now, in the spring of 1941, the attack of the superlatively equipped and organized armored divisions of the strongest industrial power of Central Europe showed that natural defenses are of value in modern mechanized warfare only when they are manned by defenders who are quantitatively and qualitatively comparable to the attackers. Even pill boxes and concrete-steel forts are of minor value if the "flying artillery" of the enemy cannot be checked by an adequately strong destroyer and bomber air fleet.

At the time of the victorious defense against the Italians, the internal weak points in Greek morale had remained hidden. Even an army fighting not wholeheartedly can win initial victories against an even less enthusiastic foe. Czech regiments of the old Austrian-

Hungarian army fought stubbornly, even gallantly and gloriously, in defense of a monarchy which had long forfeited the loyalty of the Slavic nationalities. But the real morale of an army, the real strength of resistance of a nation in war, is tested in the hours of retreat and loss. Under the crushing blows of the panzer divisions not only did the Metaxas Line crack, but also the internal structure of the Metaxas State. By starving out the peasants through ruthless taxation and sabotage of the land reforms, by alienating the workers through breaking up the labor unions and workers' organizations, by suppressing all progressive elements and anti-fascist groups, the regime of Metaxas-Koritzis-George II had undermined the roots of national defense against fascist aggression and paved the way for a Greek Quisling—General Tsalakoglou.

THERMOPYLAE

In the first days of the spring campaign the Greeks, aided by British troops brought over from Libya, put up a heroic resistance in the Struma Valley fortifications covering the way to Salonica. But Stuka bombers and heavy tanks smashed the defenses, and on April 7 German armored cars reached the Greco-Turkish border. On the following day Nazi columns approached Salonica, which they entered on the ninth.

The collapse of the Southern Yugoslav army exposed the left flank of the Anglo-Greek forces, severed all com-

munications between the Yugoslavs and their allies, and forced the hard-fighting Greek and New Zealand detachments to withdraw along the whole northwestern front. The Nazis drove through the Bitolj Gap into Greek Macedonia, in the rear of the armies in Albania and Thessaly.

British troops made a stand at Mount Olympus. Their position, however, became untenable when German mechanized columns turned the British line in a pincer movement and, thrusting across the Pindus Mountains, forced the surrender of the Greek Army of the Epirus. Only now did the "lion-hearted" blackshirts of Mussolini dare to move forward. The Nazis meanwhile swept down the plains of Thessaly, the old route of the Persian hordes of Xerxes. For a few days, Australian and British rearguards put up stubborn resistance at historic Thermopylae, scene of the epic death of King Leonidas and his three hundred men in 480 B.C.

Using all their superiority in tanks, artillery, and planes, the Nazis forced their way through the historic pass. The break-through at Thermopylae sealed the fate of Athens, as it had in 480 B.C. It marked, moreover, the loss of the last British toe-hold on the continent, with the exception of the Rock of Gibraltar at the other end of the Mediterranean.

Under the cover of Australian and New Zealand troops, the British Expeditionary Force effected the evacuation of the remaining part of the Greek mainland, with the loss of 20 percent of its manpower and of its

entire heavy equipment (estimated to be greater than the loss of equipment in Flanders after Dunkirk). The Nazis rapidly completed the occupation of Attica and the Peloponnesus. A few Greek detachments joined the British in the evacuation, but the bulk of the Greek armies ceased fighting with the capitulation of the armies of Epirus and Macedonia. On the twenty-seventh of April, just three weeks after the blitzkrieg in the Balkans was launched, German motorcycle troops entered Athens.

DEFEATISM

The rapidity of the total defeat and dismemberment of Yugoslavia did not sink into Greek public awareness until the Government of General Simovitch fled to Athens. Prince Regent Paul had come to Greece after his forced resignation in the last days of March. He had been received as a guest by King George, with whom he had in common not only family connections with the British ruling house, but also a political predilection for totalitarian regimes and a strong personal resentment against free constitutions, popular democratic movements, and the Soviets.

When, on April 13, 1941, Prince Paul was caught sending the Croat leader Vladimir Matchek a cable in code, presumably a declaration of sympathy for Dr. Matchek's negotiations with the German High Command, the Prince was asked to leave Greece. King George's indignation was great, but only the politically

ignorant or the willfully blind could have expected different behavior from fascist-minded Prince Paul. After all, not only had King George himself, and his totalitarian government, allowed the German Legation to increase its staff during the six months of the Italo-Greek War, they had also not lifted a finger to arrest the numerous persons known to be in closest contact with open and secret Nazi organizations while holding important offices in the Metaxas Youth Movement and in the apparatus of the dictatorial regime.

The desperate situation became only too evident on April 16, when King Peter of Yugoslavia and remnants of his Government landed in Athens. His last pitiful proclamation thanking his army, which had already ceased to exist, and declaring that his was the only legitimate government of the Serb, Croat, and Slovenian peoples, was not allowed to reach the outer world. Censorship in Greece was tightened still more, but the news about the situation on the front leaked through with wounded and fleeing soldiers.

By that time the majority of Greece's generals at the front were in favor of capitulation. The commanders of the various Greek armies and divisions were almost unanimous in the opinion that Greece had already done her part in the war. After all, most of the high-ranking officers had been promoted by General Metaxas, who up to the first months of the war had preserved his admiration for Prussian army drill and Nazi dictatorial methods. The same viewpoint was voiced in the Government. The sup-

porters of a policy of further resistance proposed the immediate departure of the Government for the island of Crete. Two destroyers lay off Magara, ready to take the King and the Government there.

Prime Minister Koritzis, however, opposed leaving Athens, and no decision was made. A few hours later the sudden suicide of Koritzis was announced. The official notice stated that Koritzis had seen no practical alternative to going to Crete, but at the same time had not wished to appear cowardly in the desertion of his people; the strain of the decision being too much for him, he had ended his life.

The real story of the death of Koritzis is yet to be told, but from the sparse inside information which has leaked out, it seems certain that the story of the patriotic dilemma of Koritzis belongs to the sphere of legend, and that his suicide was either forced upon him or was not a suicide at all. His constant refusal to oust the German military attaché, who during the Italo-Greek War had carried on all sorts of "informal travels" and had a radio station of his own, indicates that Koritzis had not liquidated his connections with the Nazi Minister, Prince Erbach. General Tsalakoglou, who signed the surrender and became head of the Quisling government of Greece, was an old protégé of Koritzis, whose suicide—if it was that—occurred after he had vainly tried to get in touch with Tsalakoglou.

The events of the following hours and days are complex and full of contradictions which only time will

clarify. Although all preparations for the Cabinet's departure were made, the two destroyers did not leave. The King postponed the evacuation.

Was he considering a deal with the Nazis? He first took over the Premiership and appointed Kostas Kotzias as Vice-Premier. Kotzias was the mayor of Athens and an old intimate of the late General Metaxas. He was very close to Nazism and openly opposed to the policy which had led to the conflict with the Axis. He maintained, for example, excellent relations with Prince Erbach, with Dr. Thierfelder, head of the Balkan Department of The Propaganda Division of the Nazi Party, and with Dr. Goebbels. But even after the outbreak of hostilities, he was not arrested.

Kotzias, however, politely declined. He advised the King that, since most generals at the front favored surrender, the Government must be a military one and include those high-ranking officers who were willing to fight. Kotzias has not been heard from since, and it is very possible that he may have held himself in reserve for some later opportunity in the Nazi-sponsored Tsalakoglou Cabinet.

For forty-eight hours the Cabinet was rejuggled a number of times. Finally, the King gave up the Premiership and appointed Emanuel Tsouderos Prime Minister. Tsouderos was apparently chosen on British advice, for he was a strong old Venizelist Anglophile and promised both continuation of the fighting alliance with Britain

and a conciliation of the Venizelists—the followers of the Liberal Party of the late Venizelos who had bitterly opposed the return of the King and the establishment of the Metaxas dictatorship.

One of the first actions of the new Prime Minister was to grant an amnesty to political prisoners. But the effectiveness of this gesture was impaired by its very narrow scope (it excluded prisoners convicted under the infamous "Law for the Defense of the State" promulgated by Metaxas), and by the fact that its application was put into the hands of Constantine Maniakides, a chunky policeman who for years had persecuted the republican and labor movement, exiled their leaders to island prisons, and fostered the growth of fascist sponsored organizations.

Thus the Greek "Government of National Defense and Freedom," like the Yugoslav "Government of National Unity" of Simovitch, did not possess the key for unlocking those popular forces which would have enormously strengthened the resistance against Hitler, and which, in alliance with similar forces in overrun and menaced nations, will yet bring about Hitler's overthrow.

We have briefly retraced the story of the Yugoslav and Greek collapse in the fateful weeks between the end of March and the end of April 1941.

The German conquest of the Balkans has given rise to many puzzling questions.

How did it come about? What does it mean? What will the consequences be?

To understand the significance of what has happened, and to be able to judge the course of future developments, it is necessary to go behind the immediate and ostensible facts and to examine the political and economic forces which have shaped the life of the Balkan nations throughout their history.

PART II

The Balkan Pattern

CHAPTER 3

BOARDING BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

"Who has the shore, has the sea, and the castle is his who holds the plain, but freedom dwells on the peaks of the mountain."

—CROATIAN PROVERB

We were in Sarajevo, the old Bosnian capital that was made world-famous in 1914 by the shots fired at Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne —Sarajevo, which in the spring of 1941 was again to appear in headlines all over the world when it became, for a few days, the capital of invaded Yugoslavia and the scene of the surrender of the Yugoslav Army after a twelve-day Blitz campaign by the Nazis.

We sat in a little *kavana*, a coffee bar in the old Chershia district, which still retains its Oriental character. The wild pigeons were wheeling around the minarets of the Ghasi Husrefbeg Mosque. From the old bazaar came the

clamor of bargaining crowds, and across the street some peasants, having sold their sheep, drank their *zilavka,* the meadow-yellow wine of Herzegovina.

An old story-teller and singer sat beside us; accompanying himself on the *gusla,* he sang for us the folk songs of Serbs and Albanians, of Tsintsars and Macedonians, and of half a dozen other Balkan peoples and tribes. He was a very old man with a patriarchal white beard and had lived almost a lifetime under the Osmanli Turks. His father had been with the Greek corsairs who fought the navy of the Sublime Porte, and this may be why he chose his simile from the corsair vocabulary.

When we marveled over the manifoldness of nationalities living all together in what is relatively so small a part of the Balkans, our old friend said: "Yes, there are many peoples because so many armies have passed through the Balkans, as over a corsair's boarding bridge from one ship to another."

A corsair's boarding bridge between Europe and Asia Minor, between East and West—this is what the Balkans have been from the earliest days of their known history. This southern peninsula of Europe, which is not sharply marked off from the mainland like the Spanish or Italian peninsulas, seems to have been predestined by its geographical situation to play a most important role as the link between the continents and the cultures of the East and the West—a link, but also the theater of never-ending bloody clashes and conflicts. Along the high roads from Central Europe to the Near East, along the Danube road

and the Vardar Valley road, it was not only merchants and traders who made their way, but also the armies of European and Oriental conquerors. Over the Balkan boarding bridge, Alexander of Macedonia, the Greeks, the Romans, the Crusaders, pushed into Anatolia, Thrace, Arabia, India, and Egypt; and from the other side the Persians and the Turks drove across the Balkans to invade Central Europe.

ROMANOVS, HAPSBURGS, HOHENZOLLERNS

The Tsars and the Hapsburgs, their eyes fixed on the riches of Smyrna and Istanbul, coveted the Balkans. The Wilhelmian "*Drang nach Osten*," with its plans for a Berlin-Baghdad railway, had as its first objective the Balkans; and for the past hundred years the struggles of the great European Powers were mostly initiated by conflicts over the Balkans.

In spite of the fact that the Balkans constitute a bridge between Europe and Asia Minor, they are for the most part mountainous country—hard to penetrate. "Balkan," the very name of the peninsula, means, in Turkish, "mountain." The peninsula is divided into many parallel mountain valleys with scarcely any connections among them. The roads from the seacoasts to the inner parts of the peninsula are few and poor. The mountains have acted like combs or like eel baskets in retaining some remnants from each passing army or nation. Thus, scattered among their hidden valleys and barely penetrable can-

yons, there are dozens of nationalities, languages, and religions from all points of the compass. Rival cultural and political tendencies have pushed into the peninsula and remained. Latin, German, Greek, Slav, and Turkish streams have met each other, battled, and mixed. The canvass of nationalities of the Balkans is woven out of Southern Slavs (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes), Hellenic and Latin peoples (Greeks and Rumanians), Turkish-Mongolian tribes (Albanians and Turks), and many other races. There are the Bulgars, Slavs with Mongol blood in their veins; there are the Vlachs or Wallachians, a Latin-Slav mixture; there are Gypsies and Jews, Ukrainians and Hungarians, Germans, Italians, Armenians, and Caucasian Circassians; there are Pomaks and Macedonians, and a few more.

EARLY HISTORY

The earliest inhabitants of the Balkan peninsula have left us some knowledge of their existence and habits from relics of old pottery and stone tools found in underground dwellings, most of which are situated near the shore. Archeologists believe that these were nomadic tribes, who came to the Balkans around 3500 B.C. from what is today the Ukraine and the Caspian territory. Then there is a gap until about 2500 B.C., at which time the Thracians came from Asia Minor, followed by the Illyrians and Hellenes. The Illyrians brought with them the art of making bronze. The Macedonians, of unknown origin, who later

were assimilated with the Illyrians and Hellenes, proceeded to develop an iron civilization.

Roman legions conquered the Balkans in the first century before Christ. The southern end of the peninsula, Greece, was at that time a very highly civilized but already decadent area. The northern parts were inhabited by barbarian tribes whom the Romans conquered and with whom they mixed. Four centuries later, the conquered peoples took a sort of revenge by "Illyrianizing" the topmost stratum of the Roman Empire. The Emperors Aurelian and Diocletian were Illyrians, and Diocletian in his old age made his home in Spalato, the modern city of Split on the Dalmatian coast.

The Slavs reached the northern areas of the Balkans at the beginning of the sixth century. What today is Rumania, was then Dacia, a province of the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium (Constantinople). In the first quarter of the seventh century, the Serbs and Croats in Dacia were made partners of a friendship and non-aggression pact with Eastern Rome. They defended the frontiers of the Empire against the Avars, a Finnish-Mongolian barbarian nation. At the end of the same century, the Mongolian forefathers of the Bulgars invaded the peninsula and subdued the Slavic tribes. But after three hundred years of rule, the Bulgars were entirely assimilated with the conquered Slavic peoples.

In the fifteenth century, a gigantic Turkish wave swept over the Dardanelles and over the Balkan mountains, into the Hungarian plain and even further westward to

the gates of Vienna. From then on until the twentieth century, most of the Balkans was under Turkish rule. But the Turks did not unify the conquered area; they divided it up into several *pashaliks*, or semi-autonomous provinces each governed by a pasha. The Slavic peoples drowned in this Turkish Sea, and for them there began a period of historical non-existence as nations. Of all the Balkan peoples, only the Greeks maintained a continuous national and cultural life, even under Turkish domination. There was still another spot outside the denationalizing power of the Sultan—the region of the Black Mountains, Crna Gora, or, as the Venetians translated the difficult words, Montenegro. We shall discuss the historical role of this exception to Turkish submergence later.

THE BUGLE OF THE BASTILLE

The French Revolution awakened the national energies of the Balkan peoples, and Napoleon's foundation of the state of Illyria fostered this movement. Uprising after uprising blazed forth. The great renaissance of the languages and literatures of the Balkan Slavs began at this time. In 1793, Sultan Selim armed the Serbian peasants of the Pashalik of Belgrade in order to crush a rebellion of his unruly Janizaries. This was, as a matter of fact, only one of the most striking signs of Turkish decline: part of the Raya ("Raya" means "cattle," and was the

Turkish name for all the subdued, non-Islamic nations) had received arms in spite of the rule that "never a Raya must be armed." Nine years later, the Serbs rose and tore the banner of the crescent moon from the towers of the White Castle of Belgrade.

The struggle for the liberation and self-determination of the Balkan peoples was, however, intermingled with, and often overshadowed by, the beginning of the struggle among all the Great Powers of Europe for influence over, or conquest of, the Balkans and the Near East.

In fact, with the emergence of Russia as a great power, the Ottoman Empire came to be regarded by some almost as a bulwark of the European "balance of power" in Southern Europe, and Great Britain made of its maintenance the cardinal principle of all her foreign policy. Political problems were solved more willingly by partition than by independence. The bartering of peoples and provinces "like pawns in a game" was an accepted rule of policy, which, in the circumstances of that time, awakened no pang of conscience. Even Voltaire advised Catherine the Great to help herself to the promising territories along the lower Danube. Napoleon had a full-fledged plan for the partition of Southern Europe, and thereafter the changing fortunes of European politics were frequently reflected in the handing to and fro of the provinces inhabited by the Balkan peoples.[1]

[1] *South-Eastern Europe, a Political and Economic Survey*, prepared by the Foreign Department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.

THE BATTLEGROUND OF EUROPE

Although of the utmost strategic importance, the Balkan area has throughout remained poverty-stricken. Statisticians have calculated that the Balkans have been invaded three times as much as any other part of Europe, and that there have been four times as many battles fought there as in that other historic theater of war, the Plain of Flanders. Turkish rule was devastating for the whole economic and cultural development of the Balkans. Semi-feudal relationships have remained, up into the twentieth century, as a heritage of the Turkish period. Foreign power politics and influences have played a very big role in keeping the peninsula in the chains of illiteracy, poverty, and disease. There has been, until now, but very little industry. The peasant constitutes the majority of the population. This majority is not only the poorest class, but also an incredibly indebted class. The middle classes, merchants, and estate-owners are, at the same time, the creditors and the holders of political power. This fact sharpens and envenoms the differences between the poor and the rich, the peasant masses and the bourbon few.

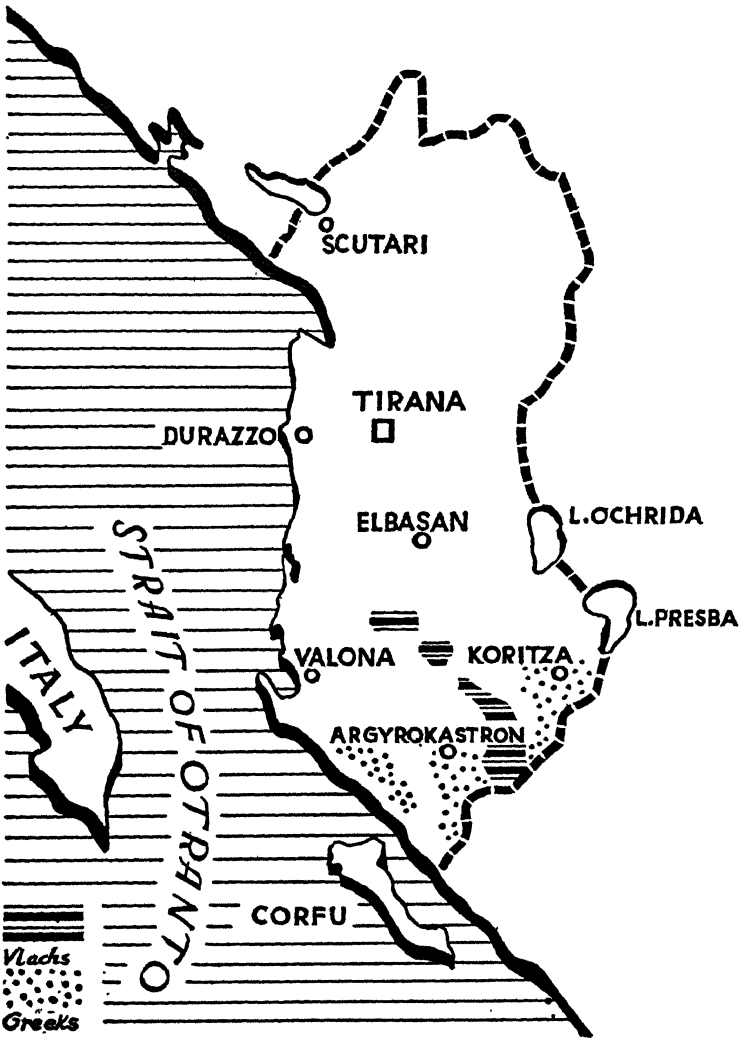
This sociological structure gives the key to the understanding of many characteristics of Balkan political life. It explains the palace revolutions and the royal dictatorships, the travesty of parliamentary forms and the corruption of the political and administrative apparatus. It

explains, also, the survival of the condottieri—political generals and little semi-Oriental despots.

On the other hand, out of the inarticulate, oppressed, illiterate, and miserable masses naturally springs the figure of the rebellious noble robber and brigand. The history of the Balkans and its folk songs are full of Robin Hoods: Hayduks in Bulgaria and Rumania; Klephts in Greece; Komitadjis in Serbia and Macedonia—all fight the Turk and the rich traitor who has joined with the Turk. The Hayduk robs the rich, but gives to the poor, and wherever he comes to a poor hut, he may safely lie down to sleep, watched over by the peasant and his wife. But, out of the noble brigands, later on, under the corrupting influence of the political machines, came the guerrilla armies of reactionary politics. These evils are the characteristic fruits of Balkan sociological and historical circumstances; and the secret societies of the Balkans may be attributed to the same circumstances: the Serbian "White Hand" and "Black Hand," and the Bulgarian "Link," which often tried their hands at forging plots and counterplots, and causing Cabinet crises and reversals of national policies.

Geographic situation, historical events, the strange mixture of nationalities, and the perpetual intervention and competition of the Great Powers shaped the fate of the Balkans and made out of them the "powder keg of Europe."

ALBANIA


SCUTARI
TIRANA
DURAZZO
ELBASAN
L.OCHRIDA
L.PRESBA
VALONA
KORITZA
ARGYROKASTRON
ITALY
STRAIT OF OTRANTO
CORFU
Vlachs
Greeks

CHAPTER 4

Albania: THE SONS OF THE EAGLE

"And from the castle walls
The crescent banner falls,
And the crowd beholds instead,
Like a portent in the sky,
Iskander's banner fly,
The black eagle with double head;
And a shout ascends on high,
For men's souls are tired of the Turks,
And their wicked ways and works."

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Although Albania is the smallest of the Balkan nations and has the sparsest population, great—so say the modern Albanian historians and linguists—are its origins and the origins of its race. Remnants of the Pelasgian language, the mother of the Basque tongue, are indeed to be found in the Albania of today and seem to prove that the

land was, in very ancient times, the home of one of the oldest indigenous folk of Europe who settled there long before the great migrations of the Indo-European peoples from Central Asia. And again, it was two of the first Indo-European tribes, the Thracians and Illyrians, who chose the Albanian coast land as their new home in Europe.

Besides the bequests made by the restless Illyrians and Thracians, another heritage from classical times is still alive in the Albanian language and customs of today. You may still hear illiterate shepherds in Southern Albania, sitting around the *mangall*, the charcoal fire, and roasting their *sarma*, a mutton hash wrapped in fresh leaves, swear by the names of "Zaa" and "E-Thana," which are merely the transformed names of the classical Greek god and goddess, Zeus and Athena.

These same people around their charcoal fire, who certainly have not studied textbooks of historical sources, will tell you proudly of the great men, known to the whole world by their conquests and achievements in three continents, who, nevertheless, came out of the backwoods of Albania. They claim as their Albanian countryman Alexander the Great, whom they call "Lek-I-Madhe," and of whom they assert that he was born in the village of Emadiya, in the Mati region of Northern Albania. One of the most terrible foes of ancient Rome, King Pyrrhus of Epirus, remembered for his victories which were so costly that they were rather defeats—"One more such victory and I am lost"—is said to have been born, and to have lived in his youth, in the Albanian part

of the Epirus Mountains. Also of Albanian origin were Emperor Justinian of Byzantium, Pope Clement XI, and blood-thirsty, spendthrift, romantic Ali Pasha, the Lion of Yanina, one of the most picturesque figures of the beginning of the nineteenth century, whose conflicts with the Sultan inspired the Greek revolt for independence. Mehmet Ali, the leader of the Egyptian revolt in 1881 and founder of the dynasty of Cairo, was an Albanian; and so were Francesco Crispi, the famous Italian statesman, and Admiral Konduriotis, the first President of the Second Greek Republic. It was an Albanian, the legendary, gallant Skanderbeg—the Iskander of Longfellow's poem—who, at a time when the Turks had the great bulk of the Balkans in their grip, defeated the army of the Sultan and founded an independent Balkan State.

In spite of these glamorous names, and in spite of its great historical heritage, Albania stepped very tardily and modestly into modern history. The Albanians were among the last of the European peoples to become a modern nation and to develop a modern European civilization.

Only a quarter of a century ago, Albanian children could learn English in the American school at Tirana, or French with the Sisters of the Sacré Coeur at Durazzo and Valona, or Italian in one of the courses given in the Italian colonies there—but it was forbidden, under pain of severe punishment, to teach writing in Albanian; and Albanian books were considered by the Turkish authorities to be worse than hidden dynamite. The trans-

formation of the different tribal idioms into a unified literary language was performed far away from its native land, in the colonies of Albanian émigrés in Egypt, Dalmatia, Italy, and Massachusetts.

The Sultans who took over Albania at the beginning of the sixteenth century—after the death of Skanderbeg and a short interlude as a Venetian protectorate—chose from among the conquered tribes twenty-five of their grand viziers, hundreds of their officers, and thousands of their best troops; but, for very good reasons, they kept the country in a state of permanent barbarism and terror. The Turkish garrisons in the main coastal towns and in some mountain strongholds kept the banner of the crescent moon flying over Albania, but the tribesmen remained relatively untamed. From time to time, revolts swept over the country. In 1835, 1836, 1842, 1849, 1851, and 1852, rebellions had to be crushed by the Janizaries. It was only in 1912 that Turkish rule was done away with as a result of the First Balkan War.

AN OPERETTA KING

The Greeks and the Serbs, with British and Russian support respectively, claimed Albania, and so did Austria-Hungary and Italy. As a result of these rivalries, Albania emerged from the peace conference that closed the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, as an "independent" country. Since all the Great Powers involved were monarchies, Albania was made a kingdom. After long and

painful negotiations between the chancelleries of London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Rome, a German prince, Wilhelm von Wied, was put on the throne of the hastily built palace in Durazzo.

The strongest supporter of the candidacy of Prince von Wied was the Austro-Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Berchtold, who aspired to be the best-dressed minister of His Apostolic Majesty, and of whom the race track touts of the day said that he was an excellent diplomat, whereas the diplomats declared him to be the best connoisseur of horses in their time. Opposition members of the Vienna Parliament characterized the Albanian policy of Count Berchtold as made to follow the pattern of certain Viennese operettas with Balkan settings.

Prince Wilhelm von Wied was a real operetta king. Before moving to his new capital, he had already founded three different Orders, with Grand Crosses and sashes. The uniforms of the Royal Guard were designed by himself. He took with him eighty-eight chamberlains and grand chamberlains, all of aristocratic origin, but he forgot to buy a dictionary of the Albanian language.

After six months, his royal glory was at an end. A revolt, financed by Italy—at that time an ally of Austria-Hungary!—drove the Viennese puppet king from his throne in order to prepare the way for some marionette of Rome and thereby secure Albania for Italy. This was in 1914.

The outbreak of the World War destroyed the Italian

plan, and also the existence of the "independent" Albanian State. During the war Albania was invaded by seven different foreign armies. In 1915, the secret Treaty of London promised Southern Albania to Italy for switching from the side of the Central Powers to the side of the Western Allies. But renewed rivalries among the victorious Great Powers caused the rejection of the Italian claim, and the Italian army of occupation had to be withdrawn. In December 1920 Albania became a member of the League of Nations. The final frontiers were drawn one year later, after a tug-of-war between Italy and Yugoslavia, and a bitter conflict with Greece, which coveted certain districts of Southern Albania.

Italy, however, having left the country by the main door, returned to influence through a back door. It was by way of economic influence and conquest that Italian power was established, not without the help of a British minister bearing the name of Chamberlain; this time, it was Austen, and not Neville, who helped Mussolini to bag a weak country. The British envoy in Tirana, who opposed the conclusion of an Italian-Albanian treaty of alliance and friendship, was recalled by Sir Austen, and Italy was allowed to state that this had been done in order to indicate British consent to the Italian pact. In November 1927 the pact was signed and Albania was pushed onto the road which led, in 1939, to the complete occupation of the country and its incorporation into the Mussolinian Empire.

SHKUPETARIA

The 11,600 square miles of Albanian territory consist largely of rough terrain—mountains and hills covered with forests. There is no railway in the whole country, but there is a pipe line, oil for the Italian Navy being more important than transportation for the Albanian population. The coast has no good or big ports. Only 11 percent of the area is arable land. The methods of agriculture are medieval. Even now, the villages seem to be built more for defense than for dwelling purposes. The 1,003,000 inhabitants are mostly (84 percent) of Albanian nationality, but there are Greek and Turkish minorities, and a few Vlachs,[1] Jews, and Serbs.

The nation is still in the making, the tribal groupings being of more importance than national unity. The Albanians are mainly divided into two large groups of tribes: the Tosks in the South, and the Ghegs in the North. Both call themselves "Shkupetars"—"Sons of the Eagle." There still exist clan wars and blood feuds. The "Law of Lek"—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth —still operates as the chief agency of capital punishment and is executed according to strict rules. This law of the blood feud is not a matter of personal hatred but actually represents one of the oldest forms of jury trial in the world.

There is oil in the country, but it is owned by the for-

[1] Called also "Tsintsars" or "Aromuns"—Slavonized Rumanians.

eigners. Corn, tobacco, rice, wine, charcoal, salt, and sulphur are the main riches of the land. Under the rule of the Sultan, the best arable land and all the natural resources of the country were owned by the "Begs," the squires. The peasant worked the Beg's land and had to deliver one-third of the crop to him. Even now the Begs own the best fields, and the peasants have to give them 25 to 33 percent of the harvest. In the mountainous part of the country, water is the vital need. The individual peasant is too poor to drill wells, and so he becomes doubly dependent upon the rich.

In 1930, an agrarian reform bill was passed, but the Begs successfully sabotaged its practical realization. Under the provisions of the law, 30 percent of the land owned by the Begs was to have been broken up into parcels for landless peasants; only one-half of one percent of the land was actually parceled out.

The East India Company of Albania was and still is the Società per lo Sviluppo Economico del'Albania (SVEA). As far back as the early twenties, SVEA had already taken control of the state monopolies, of the mineral resources, and of the state finances. More than three-fourths of the share capital of the Bank of Albania thus came into the possession of Rome. Practically all state loans were granted by Italy. For the management of the service of these loans, hundreds of Italian specialists and experts were ordered into the civil service of Albania. All state enterprises and public works were directed by Italians.

RISE AND FALL OF ZOG

The political rule of Rome was first intermediated through a native king-dictator. This man, Achmet Bey Zog I, Mbreti Shkuptarvet—Bird the First, King of all the Sons of the Eagle—was in appearance, development, and political profile a Balkan product *par excellence*. Like his royal predecessor, Wilhelm von Wied, King Zog also had something of the operetta about him: in 1938 he married a Hungarian Countess of American descent after seeing her photograph in a magazine. But the operetta was mixed with tragedy. Bird the First did more than pose smilingly with his soft brown mustache and his receding chin (which the official portraitists endeavored to conceal); he also engineered rebellions and political murders. He managed palace revolutions and undertook bloody campaigns.

As one of the historiographs of Albania puts it: "In his curious world, Bird the First did the work which Providence had assigned to him, with urbanity and serenity, combined with well-defined ruthlessness. His personal qualities stood him in good stead in a realm where the quickest trigger reigns over the quick trigger."

Achmet Bey Zog, then called Zogogli, was born in 1895, the son of the most powerful Moslem clan chieftain of the North, the head of the Mati tribe. For his education he was sent to Istanbul, first to the school for pages, and then to the Officer's Academy.

In 1912, when the First Balkan War broke out, Achmet

—then only seventeen years old—was called back to his native Albania and took command of the Mati tribe. Together with a cousin of the same age as himself, he directed the campaign against the invading Serbs. When, in the same year, Albanian independence was solemnly proclaimed in the marketplace of Valona, Achmet was among the eighty-odd notables present. He became one of the most ardent supporters of Prince Wilhelm von Wied.

In opposition to Essad Pasha, the great man behind the political scene and chief advisor to Prince Wilhelm (whom Essad later sent into exile), Achmet Zog recommended the election of a democratic assembly. His advice was not heeded, and when Essad drove out the King —with Italian connivance—Achmet hurriedly retired to his northern Mati district.

From there, he and his tribesmen joined the invading Austrians, who had penetrated Albania after having overrun Montenegro in the early stages of the First World War. The Austrians recompensed him with the title of "Imperial and Royal Colonel" and the Order of Franz Joseph. Charles, last Emperor of Austria, affixed this Order with his own Apostolic hand upon the uniform of Achmet Zog. But when he was suspected of planning to call together an Albanian national congress, he was invited in the most friendly manner to the Hapsburg Court in Vienna, and was kept there, interned, until the end of the war.

In November 1918 Achmet returned to Albania and

was made Commander-in-Chief of the Albanian armed forces. He fought against the Italians, the Serbs, and the Greeks, and found time enough in between to squelch a revolt in the capital and to become Minister of the Interior. After the crushing of still another putsch, he helped Shefket Bey Verlaci—one of the biggest estate-owners of the country and furiously opposed to every attempt at land reform—to the Premiership. When, in 1924, the regime of Shefket Bey was defeated by the Progressives under the leadership of Harvard-educated Bishop Fan Noli, Achmet Zog had to emigrate.

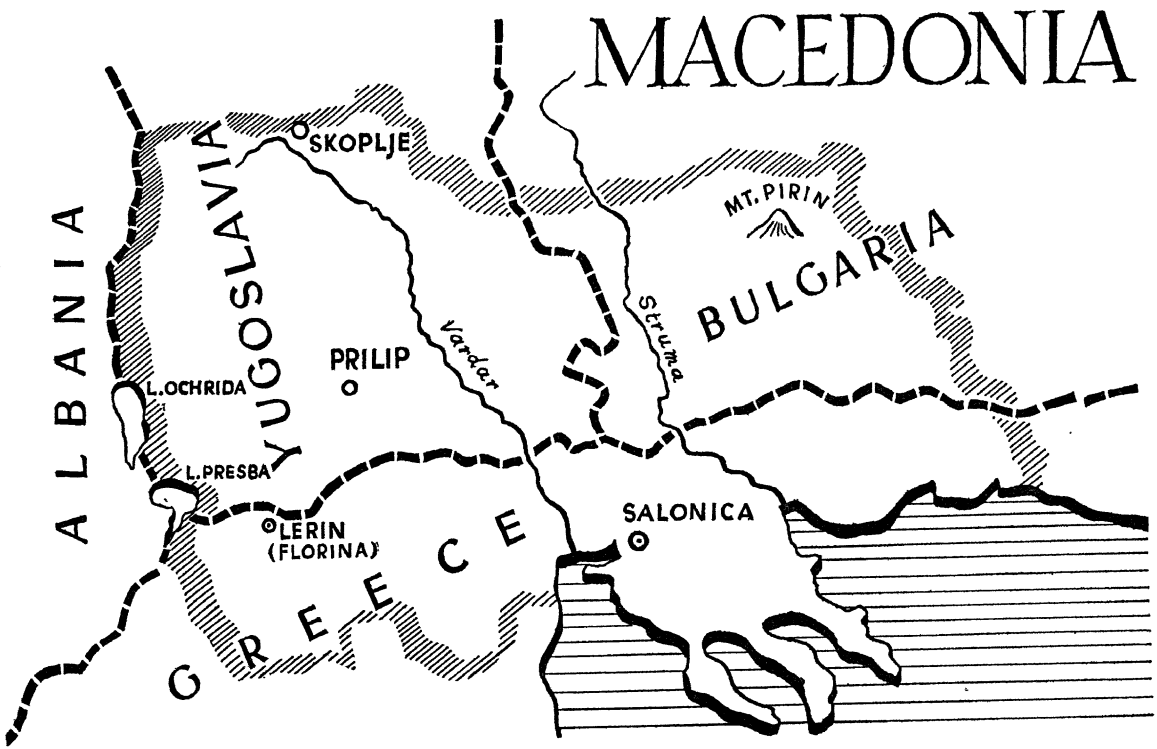
He went to Yugoslavia, where he was received with open arms by his old foes, the Serbs. The Albanian Progressive Government meanwhile committed a suicidal mistake—they followed the example of a Labour Government in England and established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. This, of course, aroused the Great Powers, and so Achmet Zog could attempt an invasion without having to fear their interference. He undertook this invasion with the open help of Yugoslav mercenaries and remnants of the White Russian army of General Wrangel, which had found asylum in Yugoslavia.

In 1925, after the flight of Fan Noli, Achmet Zog proclaimed himself President of the Albanian Republic. Three and a half years later he made himself King. Having to rely upon the Begs and the Italian-trained generals for protection from the poor and being surrounded by three countries which coveted Albanian territory in whole or in large parts, Achmet Zog chose one of the evils con-

fronting him—the greatest one. He associated himself with the Italian wolf, which, in 1939, was to swallow the Albanian Little Red Riding Hood.

In World War II, Southern Albania became a battlefield in the first stage of the Italo-Greek hostilities. Uprisings of Albanians against Italian rule were headlined, but, in reality, they did not take place on a large scale. The people, cheated by the Begs and Zog, saw no reason to revolt against the Fascisti in order to get back Zog. On the other hand, Albanian auxiliary troops, forced to serve with the Italian Army, adroitly followed the example of numerous Italian units which preferred not to fight for Il Duce, but to show their feelings towards Fascism by surrendering.

But in the heart of the Albanian landless peasant and poor shepherd there glows the same rebellious hope as in the hearts of other Balkan peasants—the desire for land and for freedom from foreign and domestic oppression.


MACEDONIA
ALBANIA
YUGOSLAVIA
SKOPLJE
MT. PIRIN
BULGARIA
Vardar
Struma
PRILIP
L. OCHRIDA
L. PRESBA
LERIN
(FLORINA)
SALONICA
GREECE

CHAPTER 5

Macedonia: FORLORN LAND

"Better a Gypsy wife or a boat at sea than a home in Macedonia."

—BALKAN FOLK SAYING

Tobacco; and violent uprisings against the Turks, and later against the Serbs and Greeks; and constant warfare and bloodshed; and bandits and Komitadjis—these were for many years all that the average newspaper reader outside the Balkans associated with the word "Macedonia."

Even the student of Balkan affairs must confess that Macedonia is a very hard nut to crack. There is an immense literature about Macedonia, but hardly another Balkan theme is so distorted by the hatred of opposing groups and parties. Nevertheless, if we try to handle it with critical objectivity, we shall find behind the nebu-

lous and bloody and sometimes very romantic façade of Macedonia the same basic problems as elsewhere in the Balkans—social, national, and international.

Macedonia is situated in the heart of the Balkans, whence comes its geographic and strategic importance. "Whoever dominates the Vardar Valley is master of the peninsula," is part of the axiomatic wisdom of all students of the Balkans. It is a country without definite frontiers, a forlorn land, divided up into three parts: a Bulgarian, a Serbian, and a Greek one. Roughly demarcated, it is the territory between Kumanovo in the north, Salonica in the south, Drama and Kavalla in the east; and Bitolj in the west.

The inhabitants are a mixture of peoples, the majority of them Slavic. Macedonian idioms belong neither to the Serbian nor to the Bulgarian tongues. They constitute a sort of link between these two branches of the South Slavic family of languages. The Serbs, however, call the Macedonian language "Southern Serbian"; the Greeks contend that the Macedonians are only "Slavophones," meaning Slavic-speaking Greeks; and the Bulgarians claim the Macedonians as pure Bulgars. The Macedonians themselves are not asked their opinion. And this is the story of Macedonia in a nutshell: a country and a people continually under the domination of other peoples and states, a bone of contention between rival neighbors, a battlefield for foreign wars, an oft-cheated rebel whose struggle for freedom and independence has been constantly misused for the sake of others.

Almost 90 percent of the Macedonians are peasants, most of them extremely poverty-stricken. Iron plows are almost unknown. The best arable lands belong, even now, to the rich Begs, and the peasant is, so to speak, a serf. Salonica, the great port of Macedonia, is not an export outlet of this agrarian area, but must serve instead as an import point for grain and flour. The chief Macedonian exports are tobacco and emigrants.

The formation of a modern nation is a sociological process which begins only at a certain level of cultural and economic development. Up to 1860, the Macedonian population—Slavs, Greeks, Rumanians, Spanyols, and half a dozen curious mixtures and assimilations, as for instance Albanianized Slavs, Hellenized Slavs, Hellenized Rumanians, Islamicized Jews—was simply a medley of clans and tribes.

During the nineteenth century, the newly formed Balkan States co-operated in trying to free their still oppressed fellow-nationals and fellow-Christians in Macedonia. From Belgrade, Athens, and Sofia they fostered rebellious groups and secret societies in Macedonia. First they did it simply by means of propaganda, but they soon added active participation in guerrilla warfare against the Sultan. Bulgarian, Serbian, and Greek bands crossed the borders into Macedonia, and *vice-versa*. Macedonia became a battlefield, full of terror, bloodshed, the smoke of burning villages, and cries of vengeance.

In the sixties of the nineteenth century, Macedonia was not yet an object of controversy between Bulgaria

on the one hand and Serbia and Greece on the other. Bulgars and Serbs worked together to free the Macedonians from the yoke of the Turk, and to create, with their liberated brothers, a great unified South Slavic Empire. It was the policy of the Tsars and the Hapsburgs which disunited the Balkan Slavic peoples. The Tsarist policy set out to form a separate Bulgaria as a bridge to Istanbul. The Hapsburgs, on the other hand, dreamt of Serbia as a springboard towards Salonica. As a result of these power politics, Macedonia became a source of disunity and hatred between Serbia and Bulgaria.

THE BULGARO-SERBIAN FEUD

The Peace of San Stefano that ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, gave the whole of Macedonia to Bulgaria, but the Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin took Macedonia away from Bulgaria and restored it to the Sultan. The Macedonian feud between Bulgaria and Serbia began after 1881, when King Milan of Serbia received from Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria the secret promise that Macedonia would be given to Serbia in return for the latter's renunciation of all claims on the province of Bosnia. Thus Austria tried to divert Serbian expansionist aspirations away from the north and toward Macedonia, away from the Adriatic and toward the Aegean. This secret pact initiated in 1885 a war between Serbia and Bulgaria in which the Serbs were defeated. The fate of Macedonia remained unsettled.

The revolution of the Young Turks in the first decade of the twentieth century made an attempt at solving the Macedonian problem by granting religious freedom to the population while, at the same time, Turkifying it nationally.

In 1912, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece concluded a Balkan pact directed against Turkey. The alliance foresaw a partition of Macedonia, the greater part going to Bulgaria. But after the victory over Turkey Serbia was denied access to the Adriatic by Austrian policy. So, with Serbia's aspirations again turned southward, the Second Balkan War flared up among the former allies. This time Bulgaria was defeated, and Serbia and Greece divided up the booty. Only about 10,000 square miles of Macedonian territory was given to Bulgaria, whereas Greece and Serbia received 28,000 square miles each.

In 1915, in the second year of World War I, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers and turned her arms against the Serbs and later against the Greeks. For three years the whole of Macedonia was under Bulgarian rule. Then came the reversal. Serbia—now Yugoslavia—and Greece again took over most of Macedonia. From then on, the Yugoslav-Bulgar frontier was, for almost twenty years, lined with barbed-wire entanglements and blockhouses. A state of constant guerrilla warfare reigned in the South Yugoslav districts, with Macedonian bands killing Yugoslav officials and receiving supplies and reinforcements from across the Bulgarian border.

IMRO

Countless are the newspaper reports and thriller stories about the Macedonian bands, about the secret organization IMRO—the four letters that spell death. And it is true that the history of IMRO often resembles the newspaper reports of Chicago gang murders in the days of Al Capone. On the other hand, the history of IMRO is rich in heroic episodes and revolutionary deeds of great idealism and valor. Crime and idealism, robbery and the struggle for freedom, were intimately interwoven in the story of IMRO, and it seems almost impossible to unravel the tangled threads.

Long before IMRO, Macedonia was peculiarly the land of outlaws and freebooters. Peasant rebels called "Haidutins" roamed the valleys between the Pirin Mountains and Lake Ochrida. In a famous poem by the Bulgar poet Boteff, the Haidutins are described as a "wing for the wretched poor, but terrible to extortionists and Turks." The fame of the Haidutins, who plundered the houses of rich Turkish Begs and killed Turkish gendarmes, was sung at the wells of every village in Macedonia.

One of the Haidutins, Apostol Petkoff, was the national hero of the seventies, eighties, and nineties. Sultan Abdul Hamid feared this man so much that he offered him an armistice and a pension, but Apostol refused. He was the uncrowned king of the Vardar marshes. We know him from a photograph taken by a Greek barber

in Salonica, to whose shop Apostol came to take a hair cut "under the eyes of the Pasha." There he stands, with a sort of turban on his head; his long, black, stiff mustachios pointed out from either side of his face; his breast covered with medals, trophies of killed Turkish officers. In his hand is a rifle with many silver nails in the stock, every nail representing a killed enemy. He fell through treason, but the joy of the Sultan and his gendarmes over the death of the "Lone Wolf" was darkened, for a new enemy had risen in Macedonia—IMRO.

In the autumn of 1893, a student and a teacher founded in Reesen, a little town of Western Macedonia, a secret society on the pattern of the Carbonaris of Italy. They called it the "Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization," and its aim was to fight for the liberation and complete independence of Macedonia. Its symbol was a black cloth, signifying serfdom under the Turks, and embroidered across it, the inscription, in white: "Liberty or Death." Members had to swear an oath on Bible, dirk, and pistol, as follows:

"I swear on my faith, conscience, and honor that I will work for the liberty of Macedonia and the Vilayet of Adrianople with all my strength and means, and that I will never betray the secrets of the revolutionary work of IMRO. Should I do so, may I be killed by this dagger, which I kiss. Amen."

Soon a network of IMRO committees covered the whole Macedonian countryside, which was divided into "revolutionary districts." The Central Committee of

IMRO, consisting of three members, resided in Salonica. IMRO's military force was well organized in secret detachments called "Chetas." These troops enforced the decisions of IMRO, and of its courts; they collected taxes, and they avenged peasants maltreated by the Turks. Even a reserve force was organized, a secret village militia. IMRO became a sort of state within the state.

For four years the Turkish authorities knew nothing of the existence of this all-Macedonian revolutionary organization. They detected it by accident in 1897. An IMRO Cheta had caught a rich Turkish Beg near Vinitza, extracted nine hundred pounds in gold coins from him, and then killed him in order to prevent betrayal or revenge. A Turkish punitive expedition burned all the villages in the neighborhood and found a secret cache of dynamite.

From then on, IMRO acted openly. Its "ambassador" Sarafoff, for instance, called on the American consul in St. Petersburg and offered him five hundred Macedonian volunteers for the war against Spain, in exchange for arms. The deal did not go through, but Sarafoff wrote that the consul "was friendly and interested."

ILINDEN

In 1903, IMRO felt strong enough to stage an uprising. On the evening of August 2, the day of the St. Ilya (the prophet Elijah), revolt flared up simultaneously in a dozen villages and hamlets. This was the famous "Ilinden"

revolt. The Turks had 150,000 soldiers garrisoned in Macedonia, but they did not suffice. They had to bring in another 150,000 troops to fight the 30,000 members of IMRO Chetas and militia. In the first weeks of the uprising the revolutionists captured three towns. The revolt lasted for three months; and 230 battles and skirmishes were fought. By the end of it, 994 insurgents and 5328 Turkish soldiers and officers had been killed. The Turks burned 200 villages, killed 4700 non-combatant peasants, raped 5000 women, and made 70,000 people homeless.

The news of the Turkish horrors stirred the capitals of civilized Europe. An international investigation was started—and buried. The Turkish gendarmerie in Macedonia, reorganized with the aid of foreign officers, continued to fight the restless Komitadjis. The guerrilla war went on as before.

When the Balkan War broke out in 1912, the IMRO chief, Todor Alexandroff, issued an appeal for open uprisings in support of the Balkan allies. The Central Committee of IMRO then knew nothing of the secret treaty of Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria concerning the division of Macedonia. The revolutionists expected to gain Macedonian freedom as a reward for their aid.

After the war, the Komitadjis (members of the revolutionary committees) turned furiously against Serbia, which had taken the greatest part of Macedonia. But by that time, the IMRO movement had already come under the influence and onto the payroll of Bulgarian nationalist

circles, the greater part of the leadership fighting not for a free Macedonia but for a Bulgarian Macedonia.

REACTION AND FEUDISM

In the first years after the World War, Bulgarian reactionary groups and the Italian Banca Commerciale made out of IMRO an instrument of reactionary internal politics in Bulgaria, and of imperialistic policy in the Balkans. Terrorist groups of IMRO were used by the fascist opponents of the great democratic peasant leader Stamboliski, who was murdered in 1923. Professor Tsankoff, a Social-Democrat turned fascist, who engineered the putsch against Stamboliski and followed him as Prime Minister, gave the whole Bulgarian district of Petrich over to the IMRO to rule as it wished, without interference, and with the power to levy taxes and terrorize the population. Bands were sent across the border into Yugoslav Macedonia, but assassination expeditions were also dispatched into Bulgarian cities to kill off opponents of the government.

IMRO had degenerated into an organization of criminals. A strong faction called IMRO United, however, kept to the original ideals of the struggle for freedom and independence, and opposed the corrupted leadership. This leadership eventually devoured itself.

In 1923, Daskaloff, former Bulgarian Minister of the Interior, was shot before the Bulgarian Legation in Prague. In 1924, Chauleff, member of the Central Com-

mittee of IMRO, was killed on the terrace of a café in Milan. In the same year Alexandroff was murdered by his colleague Protogheroff's killers. Four years later, Protogheroff was shot in a Sofia street by Alexandroff's friends. In 1925, Todor Panitza was "liquidated" in a mystery-story setting. While he was attending a performance of *Peer Gynt* at the Viennese Burg theater, the young woman who shared the box with him took a revolver out of her pocketbook and shot him in the neck. She was married, as a reward, by the man who had sent her to kill Panitza—IMRO's bloodiest, most ruthless, and most criminal chieftain, Ivan Mihailoff.

Under Mihailoff, the technique of murder was raised to that of modern conveyor systems. In 1932, fifteen of his killers engaged a dozen men of a rival IMRO group right under the windows of the palace of King Boris in Sofia. The King, his guard, and the police looked on but made no move. The murderers got away without punishment. When Mihailoff was formally indicted in 1939, 207 attorneys of Sofia begged for the honor of acting as his defenders.

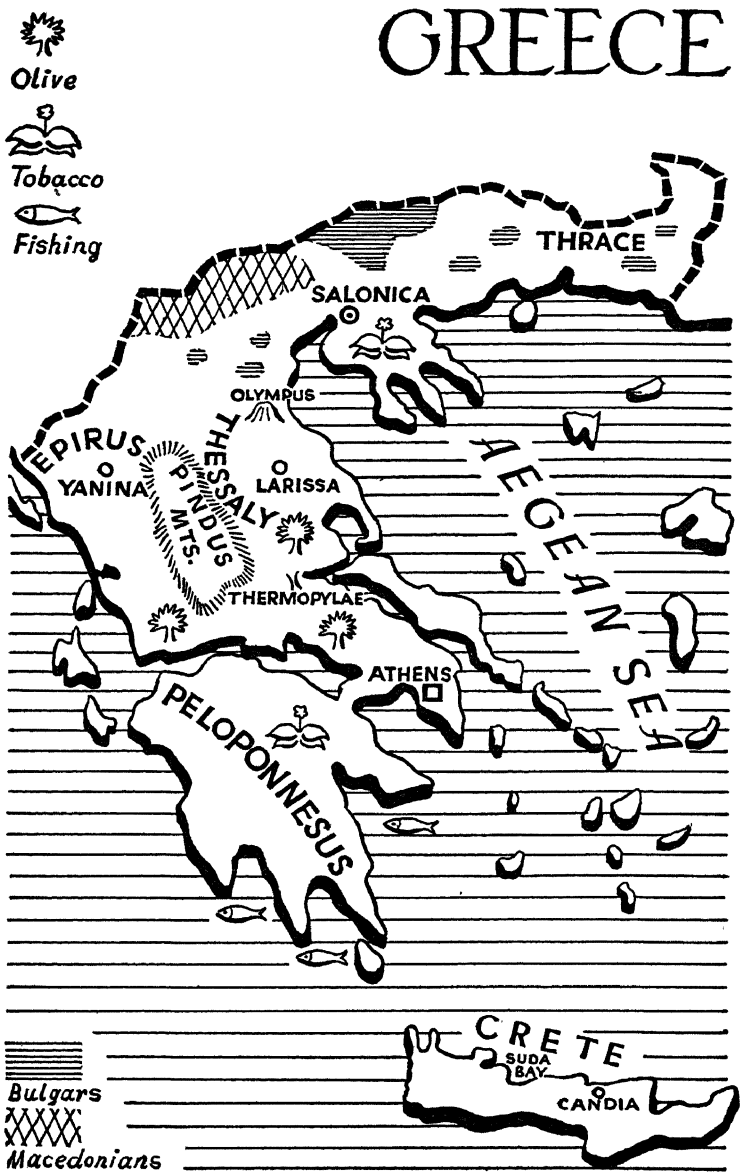
Mihailoff concluded a pact with the Croatian terrorists who founded the Ustashi organization. Their leader was Ante Pavelitch, who in 1941 was chosen by Hitler and Mussolini to become the head of the "Independent Croatian State." Mihailoff lent his ally Pavelitch some of his pet assassins in order to drill the Ustashis. One of those instructors was Vlada Tchernozemski, called "Vlada the Chauffeur," who killed King Alexander of Yugoslavia

and French Foreign Minister Barthou in Marseille in 1934.

In this same year, Mihailoff's enemies grasped the reigns of government in Sofia, after a putsch engineered by King Boris and several colonels. Mihailoff was forced to flee, and now lives somewhere in Turkey, hidden and almost forgotten, except that his memory is still cursed by the Macedonian peasants who nonetheless revere the memory of the old heroic IMRO of the times of Ilinden.[1]

In World War II, Macedonia has again become a battlefield. A few bands of reactionary Imroists joined the Nazi armies as they poured into Yugoslavia, but the bulk of the population did not greet the soldiers under the swastika as liberators. And it is significant that on the day of the Yugoslav surrender, when official Bulgarian hopes of recovering the whole of Macedonia were high, the government papers carried sharp attacks against "those Bolshevist elements of Imro United who want to split national unity by renewing their old demagogic slogan of Macedonia for the Macedonians."

[1] As this book goes to press, a news dispatch from Istanbul reports that Mihailoff has been permitted to return to Bulgaria, where he was greeted by the bloody flag with the swastika.


GREECE
Olive
Tobacco
Fishing
THRACE
SALONICA
OLYMPUS
EPIRUS
YANINA
PINDUS MTS.
THESSALY
LARISSA
AEGEAN SEA
THERMOPYLAE
ATHENS
PELOPONNESUS
CRETE
SUDA BAY
CANDIA
Bulgars
Macedonians

*

CHAPTER 6

Hellas: HOME OF BEAUTY AND POVERTY

"Of what value is a golden vase, if you can only spit blood into it?"

—GREEK FOLK SAYING

I remember one of those spring evenings in Athens when the Greek Islands really corresponded to their Homeric name—"The Green Isles." Coming down from the Acropolis, eternal monument of classic Greek beauty, our eyes full of the picture of the sunset behind the mountain chain of Salamis—that island in the "wine-colored" bay where in ancient days the Persian armada was smashed by a small fleet of Greeks—we were suddenly confronted by the striking misery of the ragged, dirty, hungry refugees from the former Greek settlements in Asia Minor.

These refugees had had to leave their homes on the Asiatic coast after the Greco-Turkish War of 1922-23, and for many months had been camping on the terraces and steps of these ancient temples, offering an appalling contrast to the architectural marvels of the "golden century of Pericles." Untouched by this contrast, gentlemen in good English clothes and neatly uniformed army officers drove to their recreation. Somebody suddenly said: "That's Greece—Hellas, home of beauty and poverty."

TOWN AND COUNTY

Greece, the spread-fingered hand of the Balkan Peninsula stretching out into the Aegean, is one of the most mountainous parts of the mountainous Balkans. Only 15 percent of her total area of 50,000 square miles is arable land; whereas, in the other Balkan countries, 30 to 60 percent is fit for agriculture. There are no important mineral resources in Greece, but its industry is greater than that of any other Balkan State.

Nonetheless, 61 percent of the population is employed in agriculture, and only 23 percent in industry and transportation. Of the 6,900,000 inhabitants, more than 1,500,000 were refugees from Asia Minor, having come into the country after 1923. Almost 90 percent of the population is Greek; the rest are Macedonians, Bulgars, and Turks, with a few Armenians, Jews, and Albanians.

The riches of the country are concentrated in the hands of a small minority of urban dwellers, mostly in Athens

and Salonica. The two-thirds of the people on farms are poverty-stricken. Traces of feudalism are still to be found in the agricultural provinces. In the decade between 1920 and 1930 there were several attempts at land reform, but only 45 percent of the land available for redistribution was parceled out. Besides, the peasants on the redistributed land had no cattle or machines, while the farm indebtedness is extraordinarily high, poor peasants paying interest as high as 50 to 80 percent on their small loans.

Town and country are divided even linguistically: the farmer and the fisherman talk Demotiki, which is a folk idiom; the urban intelligentsia, the newspapers, the authorities in their documents use Katharevousa, a literary language heavily enriched with ancient Greek words. Though there is great illiteracy in the country, there had to be introduced *numerus clausus* at the University of Athens for students of law. There were already too many attorneys—even for a Balkan capital, with its huge shifts of politicians, both active in the machines, and prospectively active. Meanwhile, physicians were sufficient in number only in the cities, and there was a great lack of skilled agriculturalists.

The industrial workers, concentrated in Salonica, Kavalla, Volo, and Piraeus, began very early to organize themselves into strong labor unions, and to build up workers' parties.

The merchant marine of Greece is one of the largest in the world. In 1938, ships with a total tonnage of 2,500,000 flew the Greek flag. Exports of tobacco and

currants were huge, practically the whole of these crops being sent abroad. The stock exchanges in Athens and Salonica have tripled their turnover within the last five years. In the same period, child mortality rose by 8 percent.

RISE OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

The seven and a half centuries of ancient Greek history need no recapitulation here, nor do the following three hundred and fifty years of Roman rule over Greece. Nor need we concern ourselves with the millennium of the Byzantine Empire, saturated with Hellenic culture, which began in A.D. 395. From 1456 the Sultans and their Pashas ruled the country, but even under Turkish rule the Greeks kept contact with the West. They had no period of historical non-existence like the Balkan Slavs.

Revolts were numerous. In 1814, when Napoleon's star went down in the West, the first light of Greek liberty rose in the East with the founding of Philike Hetaira, the secret "Society of Friends," for the purpose of liberating Greece. It was launched in a wine cellar in the Russian city of Odessa, on the Black Sea; and six years later, when the Sublime Porte was busy fighting the rebellious "Lion of Yanina," Ali Pasha, the Greeks saw their opportunity to strike.

Alexander Ypsilanti, tall, fiery-eyed, black-maned Greek exile and Russian general, suddenly disappeared

from his garrison, and, with a couple of hundred volunteers, crossed the frontier between the Tsar's Empire and the Turkish province of Moldavia, now Rumania. His ardent appeal to the Balkan peoples to rise was disregarded by the Rumanians. They hated the rich Greeks, who were the tax collectors of the Sultan and the merciless creditors and the rapacious merchants who sat in the few towns of the Danube principalities and were like leeches upon the huge body of the peasantry. Ypsilanti and his small troop were quickly defeated by the Turks, and he fled to Hungary.

But an uprising in the southern part of Greece, coming seemingly too late, had unexpected success. Athens was captured by Greek rebels, the Sultan's navy having been completely immobilized by desertions of the Greek sailors who constituted the bulk of the crews. The Turks took measures of revenge. They slaughtered fifteen thousand Greeks on the island of Chios, whereupon the Greeks killed all the Turkish men, women, and children in Athens.

A wave of sympathy for the Greeks went round the world. President Monroe expressed American solidarity with the Greek cause in his message to Congress on December 12, 1822. Byron, idol of the romantic youth of his day, joined the forces of the Greek army of liberation only to die on Greek soil. In all the countries of Western and Central Europe, Philhellenic Societies were formed and money was collected. Women prepared rolls of lint

for the Greek heroes, and young men dreamt of smuggling arms into Missolonghi, the beleaguered Greek fortress on the Corinthian Gulf.

But popular sympathy and enthusiasm are one thing, and power politics another. The Great Powers, the official champions of humanity and Christianity, at first pursued a prudent policy of non-intervention with regard to the battle for freedom of the small Christian people of Greece against the ruthless rule of the Moslem Sultan. Even more, the Holy Alliance of the Tsar of Russia, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Austria, assisted by the government of His Majesty the King of England, declared the principle of legitimacy, as represented by the Sultan, in danger through the illegitimate uprisings of the rebellious Greeks. So, Mehmet Ali of Egypt, former rebel against the Sultan and now his most loyal executor, was allowed to crush the Greek revolution, though in the small city of Missolonghi a few Greek soldiers put up an epical defense for more than eighteen months.

In 1827 Athens was again Turkish, but public opinion forced its will upon the reactionary governments, and Great Britain, France, and Russia demanded that the Sultan give the Greeks autonomy. In order to support their demand, an international fleet was sent to make a demonstration in the Aegean Sea. The firing of a chance shot caused an involuntary sea battle, and two-thirds of the Egyptian fleet and one-third of the fleet of the Great Powers was annihilated near Cape Navarino.

THE FIRST REPUBLIC

In 1829 Greek independence was finally proclaimed, and John Capo d'Istria was made President of the Republic. When he was assassinated in 1831, the Great Powers, which had in any case not looked with too indulgent an eye upon the institution of a republic, made the Greek people the gift of a king in the person of Otto von Wittelsbach. Since then, except for a republican intermezzo between 1923 and 1935, Greece has enjoyed monarchical rule.

The Greek consumption of kings has been considerable. Of the five who have held the scepter of Greece, three were dethroned. (The second of the dethroned monarchs, Constantine, was even dethroned twice.) A fourth was killed, and only one died as a king—a so-to-speak natural death—from the bite of an ape. George II, the present King of Greece, has already, before the coming of the Nazis, had one experience as a dethroned and exiled sovereign.

Kings have come and gone during the past eighty years of Greek history, but its towering figure has not been a man of royal blood. He was a sharp-tongued, witty lawyer from the Isle of Crete, gifted with many of the brilliant qualities Homer attributed to the hero of Ithaca, the indefatigable Ulysses, rich in guile and artful cunning. His lively eyes, deep and full of a peculiar light behind their gold-rimmed spectacles, had an extraordinary power over his interlocutors. His language bewitched

both the man in the street of Athens and the Professor-President in the White House in Washington. His name was Venizelos, and his parents had given him the significant Christian name Eleutherios, which means "the Deliverer," as if they had known that he would one day help to emancipate his native island.

THE TIGER OF CRETE

As a student, Venizelos joined the fighters for liberty in the almost impenetrable mountains of Crete, which was still ruled by the Turks. The tradition of the noble robbers, the Klephts who killed the Turkish overlords and sacked their castles, was still in full life. Young Venizelos took up the rifle and the book at the same time. Passionate, violent, indefatigable, greedy for power, and capable of hatred and deceit as only those island Greeks could be, for twenty-five years he directed the Cretan guerrilla bands in their struggles against the Turks. He negotiated with the consuls of the Great Powers; he bought and smuggled arms; he maintained manifold relations with the patriotic societies on the liberated Greek mainland. He learned English, French, and Italian, and took his doctor's degree in law.

In 1906 he was the soul of the biggest uprising in the history of Crete. It lasted four years, and ended with a decisive victory. A political earthquake was then convulsing the Balkans. Austria incorporated the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which it had occupied as man-

dates in 1878. Bulgaria proclaimed itself a kingdom and completely independent of the Sultan. In the cracking Ottoman Empire itself a radical nationalistic movement, the Young Turks, seized power. Incidentally, the Chief of Staff of the Turkish Army which marched from Salonica to Istanbul and promoted the Young Turkish putsch, was a man named Kemal; and this young officer would later on, as dictator of post-World War Turkey, destroy Venizelos' short dream of a Greek Empire in Asia Minor.

But this was still 1909. Venizelos, hero of the victorious revolt in Crete, was called to Athens to take over the premiership of the Greek mainland. A putsch of the Military League, an organization of non-commissioned officers, had forced the dismissal of the former government and the appointment of the "Tiger of Crete" as Prime Minister.

Venizelos immediately entrenched himself in power by founding a new political party, a progressive party which gained the favor of the broad popular masses. In the course of time, however, the Liberal Party of Venizelos went down the same road of bribery, corruption, and reaction as did similar parties in many other Balkan lands—as, for instance, the Radical Party of Pashitch in Serbia, or the Liberal Party of the brothers Bratianu in Rumania.

In 1913, at the end of the Second Balkan War, Venizelos enjoyed the triumph of seeing his country enlarged by newly conquered provinces. Crete was united with

the mainland, and so was Southern Epirus, Southern Macedonia, and a number of Aegean Islands.

The World War, which broke out one year later, brought about a sharp division in the public opinion of Greece. Four-fifths of the population of the Greek mainland were for neutrality. The inhabitants of the islands were for entering the war on the side of the Allies. Venizelos came from the islands. He favored immediate entrance into the war against the Central Powers. But King Constantine, brother-in-law of the Kaiser, was convinced of the invincibility of the German Army, in which he was an honorary field marshal.

Venizelos was forced to retire. In the autumn of 1916 he fled from Athens to Salonica, his flight cleverly covered by a double with the well-known Venizelos beard who for two days showed himself at the windows of the villa that was being watched by the police.

TRIUMPH AND DECLINE OF VENIZELOS

Salonica was occupied by a Franco-British army, and under its protection Venizelos set up a rebel government. Pressure of the Western Allies cleared the way for him back to Athens. The King fled, and Venizelos marched into the capital at the head of a Cretan regiment wearing French helmets and carrying British rifles. The blinds of most of the houses in Athens were pulled down, as a sign of protest. On the corners of the main streets only small groups of Venizelists were applauding.

Under the premiership of Venizelos, Greece joined the Allies. At the peace conference, Venizelos displayed all his startling qualities of a half-Oriental diplomat. Count Sforza, former Italian Foreign Minister and well-known lecturer and author, describes the shining personality of the "Tiger of Crete" thus: "He had the legendary power of a charmer, a siren. The Arabs would have seen in him the Barraka, the special blessing of Allah that brings luck. Wilson, intractable Wilson, had a foible for him." And Wilson and Lloyd George, charmed by the Crètan and annoyed by some Italian demands, gave Turkish Smyrna, on the Asiatic coast, to Greece.

The Turks were just then reorganizing themselves and Britain needed a sword in Asia Minor to protect the way to Iraq, Egypt, and India against possible Turkish dangers. Count Sforza says: "Lloyd George believed that Venizelos would enable him to go on waging war against the Turks with the Greek forces, without using a single Tommy. . . . Lloyd George wanted victory, but was decided to pay for it only with Greek blood."

Victory was not won, but Greek blood flowed in streams, not only in Asia Minor, but also in Southern Russia. In order to get the coveted Asiatic coast, Venizelos put at the disposal of Clemenceau a Greek division, which was sent to Odessa to fight the Soviet regime in one of the Franco-British attempts at intervention.

When the Greek Army was defeated in Smyrna and driven into the sea by the Turks under Kemal, Venizelos had already been out of power three years, having been

badly defeated in the elections of 1920. The disaster in Asia Minor caused a new dethroning; the army took over the government and executed six royalist ministers who were held responsible for the defeat. On March 25, 1924, Greece was again proclaimed a Republic.

The following years were full of strife: the royalists fighting the republicans, and both crushing popular, progressive movements. An episodic dictator, Pangalos, emerged and submerged; and then, in 1928, Venizelos returned to the premiership. His lust for power was untamed, but gone was his popularity with the little man. The "Tiger of Crete" was no longer a rebel. He crushed the labor unions, throttled the free press, arrested 180,000 farmers for not paying taxes, deported 30,000 workers accused of being Communists to concentration camps on the islands. He who in former times had been in daily touch with the man in the street, became distrustful, secluded, bitter, and vicious, and surrounded his villa with heavily armed guards. When he finally left the premiership in 1933, after being defeated in an election which he had vainly tried to influence by force and bribery, the cries of desperate farmers followed him: "Corn, corn; we starve!"

In the following years, the republican democratic regime went down the road to totalitarian dictatorship in a manner similar to that of other European countries. The crushing of the progressive forces on the Left opened the way for the fascist powers on the Right. And the same British Tories who fostered Hitler's coming to power

and entrenchment in power, helped to deliver the Greeks to dictatorship.

In 1935, General Kondylis, one of the leaders of the republican government, became the "General Monk" of the monarchist restoration. Under martial law, he held a controlled plebiscite on the return of the King—the result being known in advance. From his native Crete, whither he had retired in 1933, Venizelos, the old "Tiger," angrily observed Athens, where his followers were systematically being ousted from the civil service and the army.

In 1936, Venizelist officers attempted a putsch, but their former comrade-in-revolt and fellow-republican, General Kondylis, crushed the uprising. Venizelos had to flee into exile. The dying flames of a revolt in Crete illuminated his fall, as the first flames of a previous Cretan revolt had greeted his ascension to glory and power. He went to France and died there the same year.

LITTLE MOLTKE AS DICTATOR

King George II, returning to Athens from his English exile, was little concerned over the constitutional regime he had sworn to maintain. After the elections of 1935, General John Metaxas obtained the King's permission to "correct" the voters' will by means of sword and bayonet. The rise to dictatorial power of John Metaxas was due to the fact that he had an iron fist, that his brainier competitors died away in time, and that he had several

times missed the bus of military and political opportunities—and thus avoided both defeat and jealous rivalry. Stocky, blue-eyed, bespectacled, Metaxas was one of those minor dictators who come to play the role of Führer because they are super-mediocrities.

Speaking of Conrad Henlein, the Hitler of the Sudeten Germans, a good observer has said: "He has no face of his own; hence he is just the right man to be in the spotlight, shouting and looking like what the real Führer-makers want him to shout and look like." In a certain sense this is also true of Hitler, in his beginnings; it is certainly true of John Metaxas. He was a good officer—energetic, disciplined, skillful, and ruthless. His efficiency, however, was never impaired by thoughtfulness or traces of genius. He was educated in Potsdam, *the* city of Prussian militarism. And Potsdam seemed to be the proper place for his abilities and inclinations. So evident were his Prussian attitudes and preferences, that he was given the nickname of "Little Moltke," after General Field Marshal Helmut von Moltke, Chief of the great General Staff of the Bismarck era.

In the war against the Turks, from 1920 to 1923, General John Metaxas never had an opportunity to distinguish himself particularly. What then seemed to be a misfortune, however, turned out to have been good luck, for he was not in the limelight of defeat. In any case, only ministers, not generals, were executed as responsible for the military catastrophe in Asia Minor—and defeated generals took over the government after the lost war. This

apparently grotesque situation is not at all singular or purely Greek. Hindenburg in Germany and MacMahon and Pétain in France rose to civil power as losers of wars.

General Metaxas was not yet among those who, in generals' uniforms, sat down in ministerial chairs. It was the time of the republic, and he was a monarchist; so he had to wait. After some years, when the republic had slid down towards reaction and monarchy, Metaxas joined the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio—and without physiognomy.

His debut as leader of a new party, the "Royalist Union," was a complete failure. In the parliamentary elections of June 1935, this party won only seven seats out of three hundred. These elections created a peculiar situation: Venizelists and royalists had won the same number of seats, and the fifteen Communist deputies held the balance of power. But the Communists, like the Venizelists, were in opposition to the government.

In this uneasy situation, King George, forgetful of his British democratic education—or perhaps thinking only of the methods of British rulers in countries east of England—chose the Prussian-minded little general with the iron fist and the small popular support to resolve the parliamentary draw in behalf of the Crown. In the back of his royal mind, George evidently had the idea of "graciously" dismissing the general when the latter had done the necessary cleaning up of the fifteen elected Communist deputies and some scores of liberals. George had practiced this method once before, when he had "grate-

fully" dismissed General Kondylis, who had brought him back to Greece from exile. But with Metaxas the plan, if it was intended, went wrong. The King found himself in the situation of the sorcerer's apprentice in Goethe's poem: the broom, which he had made to live, became independent and overpowered its master.

On August 4, 1936, when George II received his Prime Minister in audience and asked for the latest reports, "Little Moltke," somewhat pale, and gazing stiffly at the ceiling, put a royal decree, ready to be signed, before His Majesty. The bewildered King read in it that he had given his Prime Minister permission to abolish parliament, to arrest all suspect persons, to establish permanent martial law and a vigorous censorship of the press, and to lead the Government along totalitarian lines, that is, the King was to have the same "power over the government" as Victor Emmanuel in Il Duce's Italy.

"No," said George, and pushed aside the pen which "Little Moltke" had proffered him.

"Oh, yes," answered "Little Moltke," with a peculiar grin, "Your Majesty will kindly consider that the decree has already been set in print, and that the first measures under the decree have already been taken."

He made a gesture out of the window. Troops with fixed bayonets had surrounded the palace. The King signed.

In his first manifesto, General Metaxas summarized his aims as follows: "The Greek press as well as the Greeks will have to abide by national discipline. For the time

being there is no question of new elections being held. Those of you who have in the past belonged to parties, are now under the obligation of forgetting them utterly. There are no more parties in Greece. The government is stable and permanent, and will apply the existing system until it has achieved a complete re-establishment of Greek society."

Concentration camps were set up, wages cut, and a Greek version of the German organization, "Strength through Joy," was created.

A report of the British Royal Institute of International Affairs immediately before the outbreak of the present war says:

He has effectively oppressed all freedom and established a strict censorship. As examples may be cited the suppression of the local government; the abolition of the chair of constitutional law in Athens University; refusal to allow public performance of *Antigone* unless the text is cut, or the reading in schools of Thucydides' version of Pericles' funeral oration, on the grounds that it is a subversive hymn to democracy. . . . His military training in Germany, and his activities during the Great War, would, in themselves, tend to indicate that he has pro-German sympathies, and his preference for efficiency rather than liberty is certainly a German characteristic.

The report ends with the words: "It is essential to remember that it is not the memory of 'Lordos Byron' which keeps or may keep Greece faithful to Great Britain. British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean, and the

British market for Greek tobacco are factors likely to weigh more heavily with a dictator."

Battleships, market possibilities, and a few other threats and presents finally did make Metaxas switch his sympathies.

BATTLESHIPS AND MARKETS

Strange as it may seem—though it will not seem too strange to the student of British foreign policy in the last decade—Metaxas, in spite of his Hitlerian leanings, had the support of the Chamberlain-Halifax-Hoare group which, in the days before Munich, repeated Hitler's slogan of Germany's right to *Lebensraum* in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. And after "Little Moltke" joined Britain, little was heard in the great world press of his dictatorial policies, although his regime continued unchanged. Correspondents who had formerly used the adjectives "fox-faced and ruthless" now suddenly began to describe him as "the fatherly-looking ally of democracy."

Metaxas died in the first stage of the war with Italy. The progressive forces of Greece had vainly demanded a real national unity based on the granting of internal liberty. The considerable successes won in the first months of the war with Italy were due, to a great extent, to the unwillingness of the Italian people to fight. But under the onslaught of the Nazi juggernaut the internal

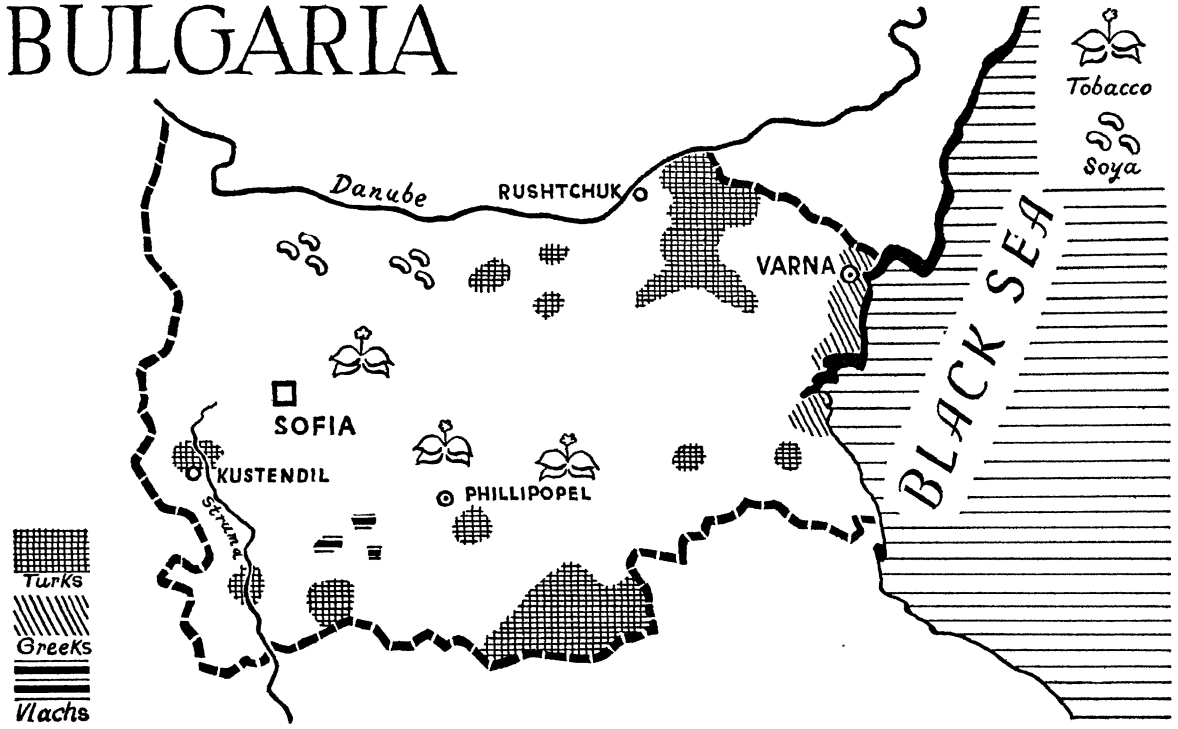
weaknesses caused by the sins of the fascist regime of Metaxas-Koritzis came to the surface.

The fact, noted by all foreign observers, that the population of Athens turned out in unexpected numbers to watch the German Army being reviewed by General Field Marshal von List on May 3, 1941; that it gave the parading Nazi regiments a reception quite different from the ones they had received in the empty avenues of Warsaw, Brussels, and Paris; together with the absence of any news of guerrilla fighting in the mountains of Epirus and the Peloponnesus; have shown that the destruction of internal freedom and the savage persecution of anti-fascist forces on the part of Greek ruling circles had struck at the very roots of the powers of resistance and of independent national life.

In the last days of May 1941, some news of the Greek capitulation and the setting-up of a Nazi-sponsored Government under General Tsalakoglou trickled through the censorships of both belligerents. It is now clear that General Tsalakoglou—twice dismissed from the Greek army, once during the Balkan wars for a "commercial affair" and again in the Greco-Turkish War of 1922 for desertion—had been in close contact with the German Minister, Prince Erbach, while the Greek-Italian fighting was in progress. Although Metaxas, Koritzis, and King George knew of General Tsalakoglou's numerous visits to the Nazi Legation, no step to forestall the activity of the "Gray General" was taken. Unmolested, he prepared

the surrender and the establishment of a Greek Quisling regime.

But, along with the Greek Quislings, there are also, hidden underground, the forces of a New Greece, which are sure to rise when the "big upheaval of the Balkans"—the upheaval of peoples rather than of army groups and generals—begins.


BULGARIA
Danube
RUSHTCHUK
VARNA
BLACK SEA
Tobacco
Soya
SOFIA
KUSTENDIL
PHILLIPOPEL
Struma
Turks
Greeks
Vlachs

CHAPTER 7

Bulgaria: BLACK SEA, BLUE SEA, AND RED RIVER

"Roar, Maritza River, red with blood;
Cry, widow, deeply struck."
—BULGARIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM

Bulgar" comes from "Bolagalar," a name which was given to the conquered Slavic inhabitants of the Central Balkans by their conquerors, a Mongolian horde akin to the Huns, Finns, and Turks. They took over the land, but they also took over the language of the defeated Slavs, and themselves became "Bolagalars" which means "plowmen."

Plowmen, peasants, still are eighty-two out of every hundred Bulgarians; with only ten employed in industry, commerce, and transportation. The 82 percent of the population that is peasant gives Bulgaria its rural face; but this vast majority earns only 40 percent of the

national income. Everywhere in the Balkans the peasant is very poor; here, however, the average size of peasant holding is smaller than in the neighboring countries, and it has been steadily decreasing through the last decades. In 1900 it was still 25 acres; in 1926, only 15. Ten years later—12; with nearly half of all holdings less than this size, and only a small number of very big estates.[1]

By contrast with other countries of Southeastern Europe—for instance, Rumania, Hungary, and part of Yugoslavia and Greece—the agrarian problem of Bulgaria is not a question of breaking up large estates. On the contrary, it is the atomization of the land that is the source of peasant misery. The continual decrease in the size of farm holdings, mentioned above, lowers the standard of living, creates an ever-growing number of landless peasants, and impedes the acquirement of mechanized equipment for agriculture.

PEASANT POVERTY AND REBELLION

Most of the farmers work with extraordinarily rudimentary tools. Wooden plows are by far more numerous than iron ones, and the majority of the Bulgarian peasants, being without horses or oxen, have to draw

[1] Of the 39,800 square miles of Bulgaria, only 13,900, or 35 percent is arable land. The population amounts to 6,220,000, of which 80 percent are Bulgarian, 10 percent Turkish, 2 percent Gypsies, 1½ percent Rumanian, and the rest Germans, Tatars, Pomaks (Islamized Bulgars), Tsintsars or Arumuns (Macedo-Rumanians), and "Gagaus" (Greek Orthodox Turks).

their plows themselves. An official census, taken in 1936, listed 450,700 wooden plows, 253,900 iron plows, but only 100 seeding machines for the entire country.

Illiteracy in 1880 amounted to 97.7 percent. In 1930, 48 percent of the population were still illiterate.

Peasant poverty is the mother of rebellion and "noble robbery." The history of Bulgaria is full of uprisings; and the extremely rich literature of folk songs and epics deals almost entirely with the adventures of the Hayduks, who fought the Turks, as well as their subservient Greek merchants and wealthy Bulgarian squires, the Phanariotes and Torbadsis.

My mother is the Pirin Mountain;
My wife is my slender rifle;
The sword is my sister;
And the bullets are my children.
Hey! How we chase the Turk,
The Torbadsi, and the Phanariot;
The fat belly and the fat purse.

The Hayduks became, for a time, the expression of Bulgarian national aspirations for liberty and independence. They imposed severe laws and a disciplined organization upon themselves. The young peasant who fled into the mountains and joined a Hayduk group swore to be abstemious, loyal, and gallant; to recognize the community of all property won by the group; and to obey the orders of the group leader, the Voivod, who was elected by the men in order to be the "eye and the brain of the band."

HISTORICAL NON-EXISTENCE AND NATIONAL RENAISSANCE

Twice in history there has been a Greater Bulgarian Empire. At the end of the ninth century Tsar Simeon ruled over an empire which included Serbia, Thrace, Macedonia, Albania, Wallachia, and parts of Hungary. It reached from the shores of the Adriatic to the Black Sea, and from the Hungarian plain to the waters of Salonica. And, in the first half of the thirteenth century, a second Bulgarian Empire comprised Bulgaria, Serbia, and Albania.

Turkish conquest meant the beginning of a period of historical non-existence for the Bulgars, as for other Balkan Slavs. The Bulgars were the last to recover their independence from the Turks, but they were the first to restore their language and their national life. The so-called Bulgarian Renaissance started in 1762, when a Bulgarian monk named Paissy wrote a history of his people in Greece. In 1806, the first book in Bulgarian was printed—in Rumania. In 1833 the Bulgars already had a high school; whereas the Serbs, who were then partly independent, had no schools of their own.

A national revolution against the Sultan took place in 1876, only to be drowned in rivers of blood. It was then that the Maritza became the "Red River" of the folk song that later became the national anthem. Western Europe was horrified. Gladstone cried out in the House of Com-

mons for the punishment of the "terrible Turk and his ferocious Bashi-Bazouks." (The latter were a mixed Asiatic group of excellent horsemen in the service of the Sultan.) A conference of the Great Powers proposed the establishment of two autonomous Bulgarian provinces under Christian governors. The Sultan rejected the proposal, and a Russo-Turkish war followed.

The Peace of San Stefano, which closed this war, created the large principality of Bulgaria, much larger than the kingdom of today. This, however, aroused the fear and anger of Austria, Britain, and Germany, none of which desired to see "the Tsar's lobby in the Balkans" become too big. So the Berlin Congress of 1878 created two Bulgarian areas: the autonomous principality of Bulgaria, with a Christian prince nominally under the overlordship of the Sultan; and the Turkish province of East Rumelia, under a Christian governor.

The first Prince of the autonomous part was of German descent and Russian citizenship. In the eyes of the Tsar he was merely a Russian Governor of an outlying possession. When Prince Alexander and his Bulgarian Ministers became too independent, the Tsar had him kidnapped and brought to Russia. This was in 1886, after a successful revolt in East Rumelia and the incorporation of this province into the autonomous Bulgarian State, and also after a short war with Serbia, which, under Austrian instigation, had sought to "restore the equilibrium of the Balkans." Alexander abdicated, on the fatherly advice of

the Tsar; and a new prince became the ruler of Bulgaria—Ferdinand of Coburg, a brother of Leopold, the merchant king of Belgium. In 1908, Prince Ferdinand proclaimed the full independence of Bulgaria, and promoted himself to King.

From 1912 to 1919, the country was almost continuously in a state of war. First, with Serbia and Greece as allies, it fought against Turkey. Then it had to fight a war over the spoils with its former allies. Defeated, it joined the Central Powers in the First World War in order to take revenge upon its neighbors.

In spite of many victories, Bulgaria was, at the end of this war period, on the losing side. In 1913 it had lost most of Macedonia and Dobrudja. In 1919 it was thrown back from the Aegean, the Blue Sea to which it had always sought an outlet. Four hundred thousand of her sons had been killed and wounded—an enormous figure for a nation of some six millions. A million Bulgarians were cut off from their homeland by the peace treaty of Neuilly. A reparations burden of two and a half billion gold francs was forced on the shoulders of a country already ruined by three wars.

As in Germany and Hungary, so in Bulgaria the injustice of the peace fed fuel to the revisionist movement. In Bulgaria this movement was not less reactionary than elsewhere, and its leaders eventually had their hand in the decision of the Bulgarian Government in 1941 to side with Nazi Germany.

BULGARIAN BOURBON

The debacle of 1919 aroused deep popular resentment. All politicians who had helped to bring Bulgaria into the catastrophe were discredited. Crafty, sly King Ferdinand, who throughout had pulled the strings of Bulgarian politics, was forced to abdicate. His son Boris sat on a shaky throne. The fact that he was the only descendant of a defeated dynasty who had kept his throne after the World War, made Boris doubly cautious.

From his father Boris had inherited a good deal of astuteness and perseverance. Bald, with the long hooked Bourbon nose that the caricaturists of his father had made known throughout the world, King Boris knew the art of waiting in the background for the opportune moment. He was an expert hand-shaker and a good quiet listener. His blue, appealing eyes had a kind of doe-like softness, though there was a hard glint of suspicion in the back of them; they were always aware of the possibilities of being murdered, but also quickly grasped the slightest chance to do away with foes. He cemented his unstable throne with blood and bones, and sat there quite firmly—giving the world yet another example of the thesis that, though it may be uncomfortable to sit on bayonets, it is feasible for quite a long time.

Boris's reign has been quite in character with Bulgaria's stormy political history. He has himself engineered two putsches so far. Twice in one decade fascism has taken

power. For many years IMRO ruled whole provinces by terror.

Corruption in office has been widespread: of the eighty-nine Cabinet ministers in office during the period from 1878 to 1926, precisely half have been convicted of "dishonest acts." The power to dissolve parliament has been much abused by the Crown: of twenty-one parliaments, sixteen have been dissolved before the expiration of their term. Of thirty-seven governments, only four have been formed along parliamentary majority lines. Political machines and parliamentary seats have been largely monopolized by a small group of the urban population. In a country that is 82 percent peasant, the social structure of parliament in 1931 was in the following percentages: lawyers, 38; bankers, 10; publishers and journalists, 6; peasants, 22; and workers, 10. The democratic and liberal parties have degenerated, and very quickly become the tools of Tsarist or Austrian political intrigue. The number of civil service employees increased from 36,000 in 1908, to 140,000 in 1934—with most of the posts given as political rewards.

The Agrarian League and the "Narrow Socialists" (a Left Socialist party, split from the old Social-Democratic Party, which continued as the "Broad Socialists" [1]) were the only political organizations that opposed Bulgarian participation in the war on the side of the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns.

[1] Out of the "Narrow Socialists" later developed the Communist Party, and still later the Workers' Party, of Bulgaria.

STAMBOLISKI

In 1919 the Agrarian League was called to power. Alexander Stamboliski, its leader, represented Bulgaria at the peace conference, and after his return became Prime Minister. Stamboliski was another of the colorful Balkan peasant leaders with an enormous mass appeal. The son of a poor peasant, of Herculean stature, broad-shouldered, with dark curly hair and a thick mustache—he almost looked like a movie villain, but he was loved and venerated by the peasants who knew that he was blood of their blood. In his youth he had borrowed money from his schoolteacher—she later became his wife—in order to go to Germany to study agriculture. He became editor of the first Bulgarian peasant newspaper, and, in 1898, he founded the Agrarian League. He was a peasant philosopher, and explained most political problems in terms of the virtues of the countryside as against the vices of the town. He even went so far as to praise "the wholesome ignorance of the peasant," in contrast to the "rotten intelligence of the law makers." His agrarian movement was, in essence, a protest against the catastrophes which the big-town upper-class leadership had brought upon the country. Feared by the Government because of his thundering oratorical gifts, he was sentenced to death in 1915 for having attacked the King for war-mongering. When his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, he wrote the King: "I will survive, but you will lose the throne."

As Prime Minister, Stamboliski gave Bulgaria the only sweeping agrarian reform of all the Balkan countries. He had 125,000 acres of private land, 375,000 acres of government land, and 70,000 acres of community and church land expropriated, and 90 percent of it broken up into parcels and given to landless peasants. This aroused the bitter ire of all the rich reactionaries.

Stamboliski's foreign policy aimed at friendly relations with all Balkan countries, and, in the end, the establishment of a Balkan Federation. It won him more hatred from the side of nationalistic and fascist-minded elements.

In the end King Boris conspired with the Military League, with Professor Tsankoff, the leader of a newly formed fascist movement, and with the chieftains of IMRO; a putsch was staged; and Stamboliski was murdered. Professor Tsankoff, a Social-Democrat turned fascist, became the head of a government which abolished the agrarian reforms, and killed about ten thousand peasants and workers without trial. From then on, more or less fascist-minded governments upheld the rule of a small minority over an oppressed majority of the people. Martial law became one of the main means of government.

OUTRAGE AND REPRESSION

From time to time, savage outbursts of terror have flooded the country with blood. In 1925, a bomb exploded in the Charles Cathedral of Sofia during the state funeral of General Georghieff. The King and the Gov-

ernment were present. They were unhurt, but 150 people were killed under the ruins of the edifice. It was never learned who planted the bomb, but it has been quite definitely established that an IMRO faction, feuding with the group that was connected with the Government, had its finger in the affair. The explosion unleashed furious persecution of the opposition, the Agrarians, the Communists, the progressive students, and thousands of other innocent people suspected of being "not loyal-minded." For five days the railroads stopped running and telephone and mail service ceased, while bands of officers and detachments of the White Russian Wrangel Army, which had found asylum in Bulgaria, killed and went about burning whole villages. Courts-martial sentenced people on such a mass scale that there were not enough executioners to go around; so Gypsies were arrested for loitering and forced to serve as auxiliary executioners.

But despite the severest repression, the population has continued to make its true feelings evident. In 1919 the Agrarians and Communists had polled 51 percent of all votes; in 1920 they had achieved 70 percent; and in 1923, 74 percent. Then the putsch of the "Golden Few" had intervened, but in 1932, after nine years of terror, the Communists won 19 seats out of 35 in the Sofia communal elections; and in 1933, in spite of the handicaps of a fraudulent election, the Agrarians and the Workers' Party (in which the Communists were leading) polled 47 percent of the total vote.

"Marxism has survived," says Professor Joseph

Roucek, of New York University, in a survey of Bulgarian politics. "Incidently, it was a Bulgarian Communist leader, Dimitroff, who took first honors at the Reichstag fire trial, by his dramatic defiance of blustering triumvir Goering." And the *Manchester Guardian,* reporting the elections of 1932, remarked: "In 1923, the Bulgarian Communists were numbered about 30,000, and gained a vote of 200,000—about one-fifth of the electorate. Nine years later, the Workers' Party emerges from an unprecedented repression with a vote of 300,000."

Of course, the "voice of the people" was duly corrected by government measures. In 1934 a fascist group, Zveno, together with the Military League, staged a putsch and set up a fascist government. The Military League was led by Colonel Veltcheff, who had had an active part in the organization of the coup of 1923 and the killing of Alexander Stamboliski. His following was composed mostly of disgruntled officers, the army having been cut down by the regulations of the peace treaties and the economic crisis. Zveno was a civilian group, including in its ranks a number of former ministers, industrialists, and politicians out of office.

The two bodies had been collaborating closely for some time. The knowledge that Professor Tsankoff, the man of 1923, was planning a new attempt to seize power, convinced Colonel Veltcheff and his allies of Zveno that the time was ripe to strike. On May 19, 1934, Sofia and the principal towns of the country were occupied during the night by groups of officers and soldiers. A military

dictatorship was installed, and the King was confronted with a *fait accompli.* His powers were considerably restricted, and Colonel Veltcheff, taking the post of "advisor" to the King, planned to play the role of Marshal Pilsudski, who, while remaining outside the Presidential Palace, actually ran Poland for many years.

But King Boris, cool, patient, and full of guile, finally outwitted the leader of the Military League. He succeeded in splitting the supporters of the men who had engineered the coup, winning over a decisive part of the officers' corps. In January 1935 Colonel Veltcheff was forced to resign from the Military League, and his friend Georghieff had to retreat from the Cabinet. Veltcheff was first advised to go abroad, but then he was arrested and tried on charges of high treason and conspiracy. He was sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.

ROYAL DICTATOR

On April 21, 1935, King Boris issued a manifesto proclaiming a royal dictatorship. But the royal dictator of Bulgaria was no happier in his attempts to solve the economic and social crisis of his country than had been his fellow King-Dictators Alexander of Yugoslavia and Carol of Rumania. Authoritarian Cabinets changed even more rapidly than was the case in former non-authoritarian times.

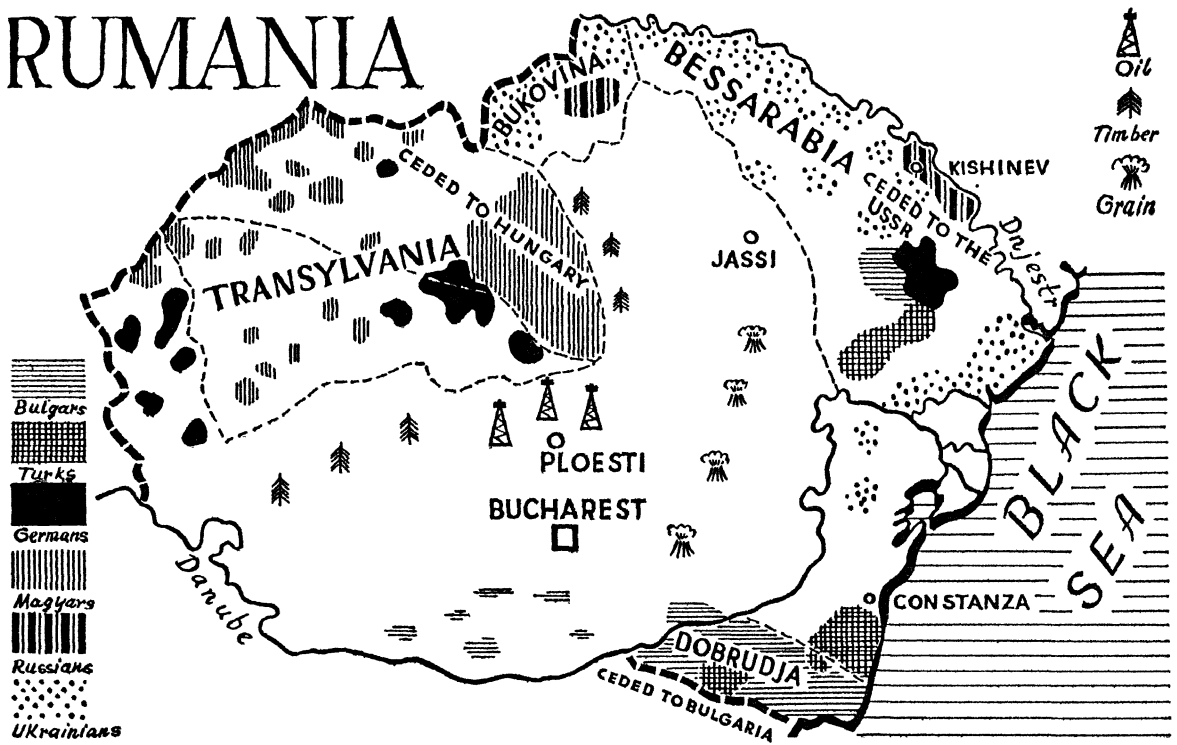
Fear and distrust of the popular masses led the royal

dictatorship to reject the popular demand for an anti-Axis policy and an alliance with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the resurgence of German imperialism and the British-French policy of appeasement began to overshadow the life of Bulgaria, as of all the other Balkan countries.

In former times Bulgarian policies were strongly influenced by the control of British, Dutch, and French capital through state loans and investments. After World War I, although Bulgaria had been on the side of the Central Powers, British bankers invested heavily in the reconstruction of the country. Foreign capital controlled 48 percent of the thousand biggest Bulgarian corporations.

The German economic conquest of Bulgaria began in 1934. It did not change the Dutch, French, Belgian, and British control of Bulgarian banks and industries; but Germany became the biggest buyer of Bulgarian exports, and the biggest seller to Bulgaria. By 1938 Germany was taking 67 percent of Bulgarian exports, while its share in Bulgarian imports amounted to 66 percent.

Nazi economic pressure and propaganda, coupled with the vision of a Greater Bulgaria established by the reconquest of lost Macedonian territories, paved the way for Bulgaria into the Axis. Once more, a Bulgarian king and government embarked on the Berlin-Baghdad expedition of German imperialism.


RUMANIA
BUKOVINA
BESSARABIA
KISHINEV
CEDED TO THE USSR
Dniestr
Oil
Timber
Grain
CEDED TO HUNGARY
TRANSYLVANIA
JASSI
PLOESTI
BUCHAREST
BLACK SEA
CONSTANZA
Danube
DOBRUDJA
CEDED TO BULGARIA
Bulgars
Turks
Germans
Magyars
Russians
Ukrainians

CHAPTER 8

Rumania: BOYARS AND BAKSHEESH

> *"If the Boyar could have laid his hand on the sun, he would have seized it, and he would have sold to the peasant, for money, the light and the heat of God."*
> —FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES ON THE FAILURE OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM IN RUMANIA

One of my friends, a profound student of Balkan political mysteries, used to say, when asked about the state of Rumanian public affairs:

"Look at Bucharest, and you will know all about it. Go down the pompous Calea Victoriei, the Avenue of Victory, with its glamorous shops and crowded cafés—just a little bit more obtrusive and glaring than their prototypes on the Champs Elysées in Paris—glance at those perfumed and pomaded officers of the Royal Guard, in corseted tunics and with made up cheeks and lips (yes,

my friend, you can watch them pull their lipsticks and powder boxes out of their pockets and renew their faded beauty); follow the procession of luxurious cars with their freight of richly dressed society women; admire, for a while, the display of jewels and decorations at the entrance of the opera house; or listen to the long titles of the guests in the salons of famous Café Capsa; and then take a turn to the left or to the right, and you will find yourself, after walking a few minutes, in one of those filthy, narrow, little streets, full of abject misery. And, after another ten minutes, you may stumble over the corpse of a dead dog—or even a horse—lying in full decomposition in the midst of the road; which means that it has been lying there for several days—just around the corner from the heart of 'Little Paris.'

"Yes, my friend, just look at this city of splendor [1] and scandal; this perfumed ladies' boudoir on a dung hill; and you will have a fairly good idea of what administration and public life look like in a country run by the laziest, most corrupt, most brutal, and least efficient upper class and bureaucracy of the whole peninsula—and you know superlatives like these mean something in the Balkans."

ORIGINS

The story of the origins of the Rumanian race and language also has its pompous main street and its less spar-

[1] As a matter of fact, "Bucharest" means "City of Joy," from the Turkish word *Bukor.*

kling slum roads. The Avenue of Victory in this sphere is the official version of "Roman ancestry" profusely displayed in all textbooks and patriotic novels. And, indeed, inscriptions carved in the milestones of the ancient military roads along the Danube River and up to the Carpathian Mountains do declare that, at the time of Emperor Trajan, Roman legions conquered and colonized the province of Dacia-Moldavia, the Wallachia and Transylvania of today. Although, two centuries later, around A.D. 100, the Roman frontier was withdrawn to the Danube, and the country north of the river was flooded by Hunnish, Gothic, Magyar, Tatar, Avar, and Slavic tribes, the Rumania upper crust likes to believe that the Roman and Dacian populations stayed there and emerged again when the temporary flood of barbarian conquerors ebbed away.

The Hungarian official historians, of course, deny this story, stating that the Rumanians are a mixture of Slavic and Mongolian tribes, having nothing in common with the ancient Roman-Dacian population. This conflict of historical theses is not a purely academic matter. Rumanian and Hungarian territorial claims are each backed by one of these opposing theories. The Rumanians base their title to Transylvania (acquired from Hungary in 1919, and in great part lost again in 1940) on the historical fact of their being the original inhabitants of that province. The Hungarian revisionists, on the contrary, declare that "historical right" is on their side because the original inhabitants of Transylvania were a nomadic people, akin to

the Magyars. The Rumanians, according to this version, came to Transylvania only in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when they were driven out of their original homeland in Wallachia and Moldavia by greedy Turks and Greeks. They came as immigrants, and were hospitably received by the Hungarian natives who had lost much blood in their wars against the Crescent and therefore welcomed Christian immigration. The ungrateful descendants of those Rumanian immigrants then proceeded to grab the land that had always belonged to the thousand-year-old crown of Hungary.

Weighed by an unbiased mind, neither of these two theories is more than 50 percent correct, the truth being, evidently, that the Rumanians are descended from a mixture between the ancient Roman-Dacian population and their successive Slavic, Mongolian, and Turkish conquerors. As a matter of fact the modern Rumanian language has no more Latin ingredients than does the English of our days, the proportion between Latin and Slavonic parts being two to three. Until about 1850 the Rumanians used the Cyrillic alphabet, like the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Russians. The introduction of the Latin alphabet in the second half of the last century was due to the attempts of Austrian and Roman Catholic influences to counteract the cultural weight of Slavic, Greek Orthodox Russia.

But whatever their origin, the Rumanians of Transylvania became, as time went on, the most numerous element of the population. Treated none too well by their Hungarian rulers, they strove for liberation and union

with their brothers across the frontier in Rumania. There, the wishes of the "unredeemed parts of the nation" met with the kindred dream of a Greater Rumania, of "Romania Mare."

ROMANIA MARE

Romania Mare became a reality after World War I. The old kingdom of only 53,000 square miles was then more than doubled by the conquest and annexation of Transylvania (from Hungary), Bukovina (from Austria), and Bessarabia (from Russia). With its 114,000 square miles equaling the size of Italy, Greater Rumania became the largest of the Balkan States, not only uniting within its boundaries all Rumanians, but also having in its turn to keep a sharp watch on strong national minorities, which became one source of continual trouble. Of the, roughly, 20,000,000 inhabitants, no more than 13,500,000 were Rumanian, the rest being composed of strong minorities of Hungarians, Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Germans, and Bulgarians.

This was not the only big trouble of Greater Rumania. With the richest soil in Southeastern Europe; with precious stocks of oil, timber, salt, and coal; with gold and silver mines; with extensive fisheries and bigger industries than any other Balkan country, the bulk of Rumania's people is stricken by the most cruel misery. The peasants —80 percent of the population—might all be classified according to the old French saying: "There are three

classes of peasants: the poor, the very poor, and the exceedingly poor."

Forty percent of the land, the best arable soil, is in the hands of the Boyars, the owners of vast estates. The agrarian reform of 1921 took place, to a large extent, only on paper. Even the peasants who received parcels from broken-up estates remained poverty-stricken, for they had no money with which to buy seeds, tools, or fertilizer. "Thirty-seven percent of the peasant families do not possess draft animals; 47 percent do not even have sheep; and more than half are completely illiterate," reads a complaint of the National Peasant Party of Rumania. "The richest soil in Europe produces only one-third as much as does Denmark's less fertile land."

Forced to borrow money, if not for machinery and cattle, then for taxes, the Rumanian peasant fell into the clutches of as merciless a gang of usurers as ever lived. Nowhere in the world is the per capita debt of farmers so high as in Rumania. The banks for agricultural credit, and private bankers and money lenders, extort 18 to 55 percent in interest from loans—with an official rate of only 9 percent fixed by law.

V. Potirca, a member of the Rumanian Lower Chamber, testified under oath before a parliamentary investigating committee that a banker in the town of Tutov in 1926 earned a profit of 15,000,000 lei on a capital of only 19,000,000. In 1927 this gentleman had a less successful business year: his earnings amounted to only 16,000,000 lei on a capital of 20,000,000.

The newspaper *Dimineata,* one of the biggest in the country, wrote in 1935 (and the censor let it pass): "In every village, and on every farm, horrible and lamentable scenes go on when the tax collector comes, or when cattle are impounded or land is taken away from farmers who cannot pay their debts. The usurers have ruined whole villages during the last few years. Suicides are common in all rural districts." And the magazine *Mine* at about the same time published an article about the district of Dolja, where a usurer named Vuza-Tudor kept seventy villages in serf-like dependency: "He extorts 60 to 120 percent interest. There are peasants who, having borrowed 7000 to 9000 lei from him, have already paid 70,000 to 90,000 lei back, without having cleared their debts."

Taxes are collected with utmost severity. Where the indebted peasant cannot borrow any more money with which to pay his taxes, he is inexorably forced to leave his soil. In 1936, according to official figures, 16,000 peasants had to part with their land because of outstanding taxes alone. In 1937, 11,000 peasants met the same fate. In the decade between 1927 and 1937, more than 200,000 small peasant proprietors had already been made landless by tax foreclosures.

Only a portion of the landless peasantry find jobs in the oil fields and factories. The steady stream of the newly dispossessed, looking for work at any price, coupled with the complete absence of labor legislation and a ruthless suppression of labor organizations, keeps the standard of living of the industrial population on a level only slightly

higher than the peasant misery. Industrial wages in Rumania were, for instance, only 38 percent of the average wage paid in neighboring Czechoslovakia, and amounted to 57 percent of the average Polish wage.

Strikes, peasant uprisings, and even the mere attempt to organize independent labor unions have been suppressed with a ferocity which has made the name of the secret police—the Siguranza—infamous throughout the Balkans. The prisons of Doftana and Illava, the "Bastilles of Rumania," throw a heavy shadow over the entire population. "I have never heard these names pronounced without hatred and fear," a French diplomat wrote in his memoirs, published anonymously in Paris shortly before the outbreak of the present war.

In striking contrast to the wretched vegetative existence of the millions in the lower depths, is the life of the happy few: the Boyars, the wealthy urban population, and higher bureaucracy. The Grand Boyars, who under Turkish rule had had the rights of life and death over their subjects, still deal with the peasant as if he were a serf.

ADMINISTRATION BY BAKSHEESH

"To govern means to become rich." That is the most common maxim of the ruling apparatus. To this day the bureaucracy has retained the manners and the spirit of the former Turkish rulers. Its lower ranks are so badly underpaid that bribery is universal. " 'Baksheesh,' the Turkish word for 'tip,' is still the magic key that opens

office doors," states one student of Rumanian history and society.

This regime of baksheesh and bribery is not hidden; it operates quite openly. I well remember my first personal encounter with it. I was on my first trip from Bucharest to the seashore, and was sitting in a compartment of a railroad car with some Rumanian merchants and salesmen. One of them was telling a "true story."

"In the town of Constanza is a statue of the ancient Roman poet Ovid, who wrote his most famous odes while living there in exile. A clever salesman who had a photo of this statue, showed it to the peasants of a village near Silistria who wanted to put up a monument commemorating the day of the birth of Romania Mare.

"The salesman said he was a sculptor, and that this, his latest work, was being currently exhibited for sale on the market place in Constanza. The mayor and the police magistrate of the village, having been bribed by the salesman, recommended that the peasants buy the exhibited work. They gave the salesman ten thousand lei, which he divided in three parts: one for the mayor, one for the police magistrate, and the third for himself.

"When the peasants came to Constanza with their carts and tried to carry off the statue, they were arrested. They had to pay two thousand lei baksheesh to be allowed to get away."

All the passengers in the compartment laughed, evidently considering the story an excellently edifying one. Not a single one doubted its authenticity. I had not yet

gotten over my astonishment, when the conductor came in to ask for our tickets. I was the only one who had a ticket. Everyone else gave him baksheesh.

"The poor conductor has to live," was the explanation they gave. "The government doesn't pay him his salary, so he must earn his living this way—and the passengers are better off too. They pay only half the price of the ticket."

"And what about the inspector, if some inspector should come?" I asked.

"Oh, then the poor man would have to give up half his baksheesh."

THRONE WITHOUT PALACE

The seemingly anomalous state of public affairs in Rumania can be explained only in the light of past developments in Rumanian history and politics.

Once before in history there has been a Greater Moldavian Empire,[1] when Prince Michael the Conqueror, in the sixteenth century, united the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and extended his empire to Transylvania, Bulgaria, and a part of Bessarabia. But the Turkish conquest followed.

The Turks, however, let native Boyars and Greek princes rule over the conquered provinces. With the

[1] It was only when the separated areas of Moldavia and Wallachia were once again united—in 1858—that the word Rumania first appeared on the maps of the Balkans.

Greek princes there came to Rumania a great number of Greek merchants, mostly from the Light House (Phanar) district of Istanbul, and settled in the towns. These Greeks (called "Phanariotes") soon had all commerce and urban business concentrated in their hands. They were especially hated by the Rumanian peasants; but so oppressively unenlightened were the latter, that they thought of themselves, even at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Greeks.

In 1774 the Tsar forced Turkey to recognize a Russian protectorate over the two Danube Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. In 1848, however, a revolt flared up —inspired by the great uprisings of the peoples of France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Hungary—in which the Rumanians demanded complete independence from the Sultan. Whereupon the Tsar and the Sultan immediately joined forces to crush the revolutionists—the Sublime Porte charging the rebels with being "inspired by the spirit of socialism"; and the Tsar claiming that the uprising was directed "against God and legitimacy."

The Russian protectorate ended in 1856, after the Crimean War of the French, British, and Turks against the Russians. Moldavia and Wallachia were united in 1858, and a native Boyar, Colonel Cuza, was elected Prince. When the news of his election was brought him, Cuza said to the notables, "I am afraid you have made a mistake."

The princely guess proved correct. By 1866 the general discontent had reached such a point that rebellion

was brewing all over the land. One night, Prince Cuza found himself awakened by the touch of several pistol muzzles. A palace revolution had taken place. In his nightshirt, cursing over his interrupted night with a newly acquired mistress, Prince Cuza signed his abdication on a bit of paper held against the back of an adjutant.

Several candidates were considered by the Great Powers, and finally Prince Karl von Hohenzollern-Siegmaringen received the approval of the Tsar, the Hapsburgs, the British Government, and Napoleon III. But when he had made himself ready to leave for Bucharest, the Austro-Prussian War broke out. Karl realized at once that, as a Prussian officer, he would not be able to pass through Austria in the regular way. He therefore arrived in his capital (which had just been destroyed by a huge fire) with a false passport, as Mr. Hetlinger, a Swiss drummer bound for Odessa.

"Where is the palace?" he asked the reception committee, and received the classical answer: "Majesty, we have offered you a throne—there was no word or promise of a palace."

In 1877 Karl, who had Rumanized his name to Carol, profiting from a Russo-Turkish war, declared the complete independence of Rumania. In 1913 Rumania joined the victorious Serbs and Greeks at the last moment of the Second Balkan War and occupied—without fighting—the Dobrudja province of Bulgaria. In 1916, under Carol's successor, Ferdinand, Rumania cast in her lot with the Allies against the Central Powers, in spite of a pact

with the latter. She emerged from the war as Romania Mare.

BRATIANU DYNASTY

Besides the royal dynasty, there has been, since Rumania's liberation from Turkish rule, another dynasty—a political one—that of the Bratianu family. The first of the Bratianus, Jon, in many ways resembled the Greek Venizelos and the Serbian Pashitch, whom we shall discuss in the next chapter. Bratianu also started as a rebel, and had to go into exile. Once back in his native country, he took an active part in the propaganda for the union of Wallachia and Moldavia, and the election of Prince Cuza. But it was not until the days of Prince Karl-Carol that the rise of the Bratianu dynasty really began.

In the beginning Bratianu, who had founded a progressive party, the Liberal Party of Rumania, clashed with the Crown and the rich Boyars. Twice he attempted a putsch against his King. Then peace was made, and Jon Bratianu became Prime Minister. He was the driving force which brought Rumania into the Turkish-Russian War of 1877, and independence was the fruit of that victory.

When Jon retired from politics, before World War I, he left to his son Jonel the leadership of the Liberal Party, which had developed into a tremendous machine with its name as the only remainder of its former liberalism. It was Jonel who switched Rumania from the camp of

the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns to that of the Allies in the World War. In 1919, on orders from Versailles, he crushed the Hungarian Soviets. Under the protection of his soldiers, Admiral Horthy and his fascist regime came to power in Hungary.

The Conservative Party, the former great rival of the Liberals and the advocate of a foreign policy of alliance with Vienna-Berlin, disappeared, smashed by the victory of 1918. But the Liberals took the place on the right which the Conservatives had held before, and became the representatives of commerce, finance, and industry.

Black-eyed, black-haired, very pale, Jonel Bratianu was a much more imposing and majestic figure than King Ferdinand—who resigned himself to the role of kingly representation. Not so easy to handle was Crown Prince Carol. This young, mercurial cavalry officer with a fierce passion for expensive horses, red-haired mistresses, and additional pocket money, several times clashed very sharply with the uncrowned head of the Bratianu dynasty.

The Prime Minister had already expressed his distaste for Prince Carol's first marriage venture when the young man disappeared from Court for several days—and reappeared as the husband of Madame Zizi Lambrino. After this affair had been liquidated, Carol had a new one with the copper-haired Magda Lupescu. Much more concerned over the nimbus of the dynasty than over who was to be heir to the throne, Jonel Bratianu forced the

Crown Prince to renounce his right to the crown. This was in 1925.

Two years later King Ferdinand died and, shortly thereafter, he was followed by Jonel Bratianu. The premiership was passed on to a third Bratianu, Vintila; while Michael, the ten-year-old son of Carol, followed his grandfather Ferdinand to the throne.

Vintila Bratianu could not cope with the rising economic crisis. The Peasant Party, under the leadership of Juliu Maniu, had grown to considerable strength and vehemently asked for a change in the corrupt regime of the Liberals.[1] One hundred and fifty thousand peasants gathered on May 27, 1928, in the Transylvanian city of Alba Julia and threatened to undertake a march on Bucharest. The situation seeming favorable for his return, exiled Prince Carol was intending on this same day to fly from England to Bucharest. Both plans turned out to be failures. But in the autumn of that year the Liberal Government was forced to resign and Juliu Maniu became Prime Minister.

MANIU

While there is a certain similarity and analogy between the leading men of the degenerating liberal parties of

[1] G. Costa Foru, a former member of the Cabinet, and President of the League for Human Rights, called the Liberal Party "the most abject political monstrosity." In 1925 he wrote: "The Liberal Party of the Bratianus fosters the Siguranza in every way. The Siguranza as a matter of fact is identical with the Party, providing a secure election whenever needed. The Siguranza is the vanguard of Rumanian fascism."

Serbia, Greece, and Rumania—between Pashitch, Venizelos, and Bratianu—there is equally a certain affinity between the organizers of the big peasant movements in the Balkans—between Stamboliski in Bulgaria, Raditch in Croatia, and Maniu in Rumania. But whereas the Bratianus were worthy matches for their shrewd, ruthless, and unscrupulous colleagues, Pashitch and Venizelos, Maniu was a much paler personality than the leaders of the Bulgarian and Croatian peasant parties. Nevertheless, he was a friend of the peasants. He tried to better their social position. He had as his aims democracy, a peasant state, and the co-operative organization of peasant economy, credit, and education. He was fair-minded and honest, but often nebulous and weak.

When Maniu became Prime Minister for the first time in 1926, he abolished the censorship, ousted hundreds of corrupt bureaucrats, suppressed anti-Semitic riots, and improved the legal and actual situation of the national minorities. Elections without terror were held for the first time in Rumania under his prime-ministership. But Maniu had many illusions. One of them was that he could clip the wings of the strongly entrenched Liberal oligarchy by securing the return of exiled Carol.

In June 1930, Carol returned, and in October he had already had Maniu maneuvered out of the Government. A severe agricultural crisis helped him in arousing the peasants against the government. The premiership was given to Carol's former tutor, Professor Jorga, leader of

a small conservative party called the National Union. Jorga won the elections thanks to the electoral law effected back in 1926 by the Liberal Party of the Bratianus, in order to secure a safe majority for every government. This law gave 60 percent and more of the parliamentary seats to the party which had won 40 percent of the electoral votes.

In spite of his splendid victory in the elections, Jorga could not cope with the growing economic and political crisis. He left, and Carol turned to his old foes, the Liberal Party, now under the nominal leadership of the fourth and least splendid of the Bratianus, Constantine.

From 1933 on, fascist anti-Semitic groups had grown rapidly in the country, encouraged by the success of Nazism in Germany. But anti-Semitism was no new thing in Rumania. The Christian Defense League of Professor Cuza dated from the old days before World War I, whereas its more extreme offshoot, the "Iron Guard" of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, had made its first prominent appearance following an attempted murder of Minister Angelescu in 1927.

IRON GUARD

In 1933, the Iron Guard was dissolved by the Liberal Government of Duca—who had to pay with his life for that act. His successor, Tatarescu, fought the Iron Guard, but never succeeded in suppressing it effectively, being

hampered by his own reactionary leanings[1] and by the equivocal attitude of Carol, who slyly shifted one foot from the camp of the Little Entente to the camp of the Axis, and flirted with totalitarian ideas and fascist theories.

Codreanu, who had transformed his dissolved Iron Guard into the party, All for the Fatherland, continued to carry on his propaganda and terroristic activities. He recruited his members largely from among dispossessed Boyars, from the "Golden Youth" of Bucharest, and from young students, lawyers, professors, retired army officers, and general riff-raff. Born of a German mother and Polish father, Codreanu preached the superiority of the Rumanian race, ardent anti-Semitism, and a medley of fascist ideas about the corporative state and fascist efficiency. He opposed the King's mistress, Magda Lupescu, and so antagonized Carol—who otherwise might have fostered his fascist movement. Under the circumstances, the King turned to the competition. He gave his support to the newly formed National Christian Party of Goga, and to the Rumanian Front of Dr. Vaida-Voëvod.

In December 1937 something unprecedented in the political history of Rumania took place. A government in power did not win the elections. The Liberal Party received only 38 percent of the votes. Tatarescu resigned, and King Carol appointed, in a sort of coup, the anti-Semitic leader Goga as Prime Minister—although the National Christian Party had polled less than 10 percent of

[1] It was a Tatarescu, Stefan, a brother of the Prime Minister, who was co-founder of the fascist Rumanian Front.

the votes. The Goga government lasted only forty-five days, causing general confusion at home and abroad.

FROM DICTATORSHIP TO EXILE

In March 1938 Carol appointed a so-called Cabinet of National Concentration. Like Alexander of Yugoslavia, he tore up the Constitution, engineered a plebiscite on a new one, and set up a military dictatorship. Codreanu was arrested and, some time later, was shot—allegedly while attempting to escape. But having liquidated one fascist leader, King Carol steered his government and country full into the stream of fascism, integrating the Rumanian economy with the German one, and promoting a full-fledged totalitarian internal policy.

Still, he seemed none too trustworthy an ally to Berlin. Hungary and Bulgaria had a better record, and so they were given parts of Rumania in August and September 1940. Rumania was forced to cede Dobrudja, with 7700 square miles and 380,000 inhabitants, to Bulgaria; and Northern Transylvania, with 18,000 square miles and 2,400,000 inhabitants, to Hungary. These cessions of territory, coming so soon after the cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union,[1] shattered the whole regime. Carol, Madame Lupescu, and their camarilla were sent into exile as scapegoats. Michael was

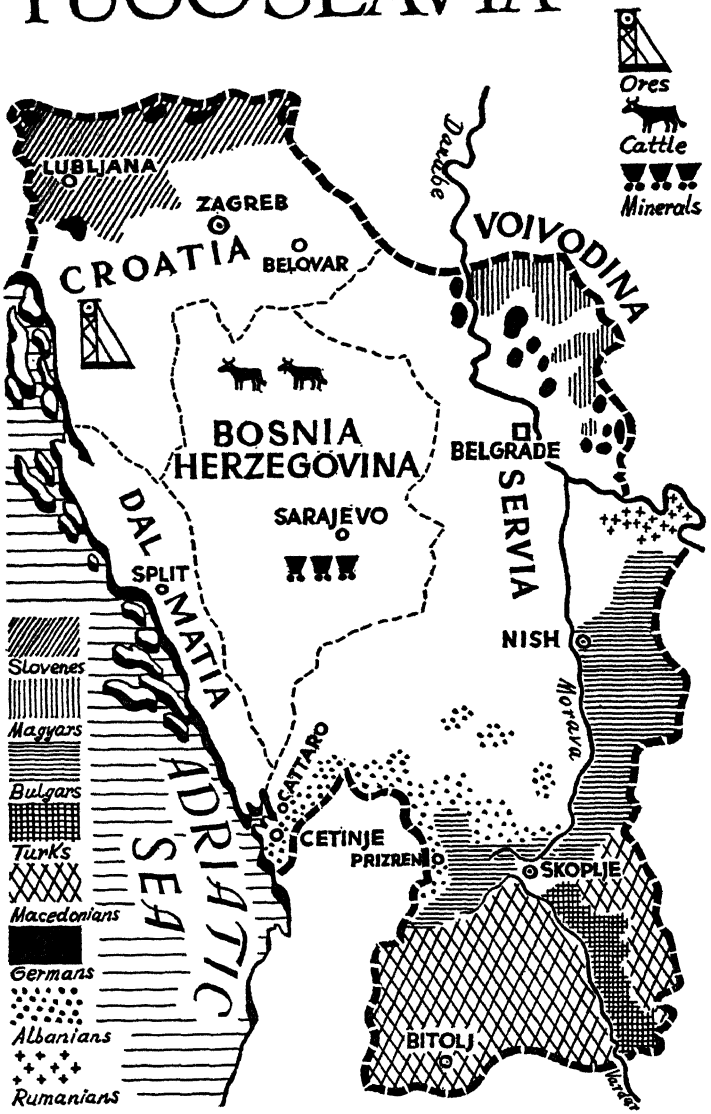
[1] Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia were ceded on June 28, 1940. They constitute a territory of 6000 and 17,000 square miles respectively, and have populations of 500,000 and 3,200,000. The Bessarabian question will be dealt with in more detail in another chapter.

proclaimed King for a second time, but the real power was taken over by the new Prime Minister, General Antonescu, who formed a government together with Codreanu's successor, Iron Guard leader Horia Sima.

The triumph of the Iron Guard did not last long. Nazi Germany wanted the country to be run exclusively on its own economic and military plans. The chief positions in industry and administration were occupied by Nazis or their trustees. When the Iron Guard showed its resentment of this procedure, the Nazi Army and its puppet General Antonescu quickly disposed of the greedy Iron Guardists. Most of their leaders were imprisoned or shot, and Horia Sima had to flee.

Rumania became a mere province of the Greater German *Lebensraum.*

YUGOSLAVIA


Ores
Cattle
Minerals
LUBLJANA
ZAGREB
CROATIA
BELOVAR
Danube
VOIVODINA
BOSNIA
HERZEGOVINA
BELGRADE
SERVIA
SARAJEVO
SPLIT
DALMATIA
NISH
Morava
Slovenes
Magyars
Bulgars
Turks
Macedonians
Germans
Albanians
Rumanians
ADRIATIC SEA
CATTARO
CETINJE
PRIZREN
SKOPLJE
BITOLJ
Vardar

CHAPTER 9

"Unity or Death": THE STORY OF YUGOSLAVIA

"A state without social justice is a frame without a picture; a state without justice for its nationalities is a vase without flowers."

—STEPAN RADITCH

The Balkans in miniature—that's Yugoslavia." These are the words of Stepan Raditch, founder of the Croatian Peasant Party and leader of the struggle for a federated state of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes; they were uttered ten years after the foundation of Yugoslavia, and a few days before he was fatally wounded by a bullet in open parliamentary session.

What Raditch meant was that Yugoslavia, like the Balkans as a whole, is an area containing every type of geographical, national, economic, religious, and social antagonism. As one of the "succession states" of World

War I, Yugoslavia was composed of the formerly independent Serbian and Montenegrin Kingdoms; the former Hungarian Provinces of Croatia, Slovenia, and Voivodina; the Austrian Crown Land of Dalmatia; and the Austro-Hungarian "Empire Provinces" of Bosnia and Herzegovina—every part having its own history, different from that of the others.

Spreading roughly over 100,000 square miles, Yugoslavia—the second largest of the Balkan States—comprised such different landscapes as: the rich, fertile though hilly, highly cultivated province of Croatia, with its neat villages and vast fields of golden wheat; rocky, mountainous, poverty-stricken Macedonia, with its wild, deep canyons and cruel, miserly soil which barely feeds the man who gives it all his sweat and energy; Herzegovina, land of old oak forests and Oriental-looking towns; and Dalmatia, hot, dry, and thirsty, nursing its tiny, forlorn villages in the barren Karst Mountains, and proud of its beautiful Roman and Greek cities on the coast of the Adriatic—the "Azure Blue Sea" of South Slav songs.

The Yugoslav population of 15,000,000 has a manifold national and religious pattern. There are about 7,000,000 Serbs, 3,500,000 Croats, 1,175,000 Slovenes, 600,000 Macedonians, 500,000 Germans, and as many Albanians; the rest are Bulgarians, Rumanians, Jews, Gypsies, Tsintsars, Italians, Turks, and a few other national splinters.

The Serbs are Orthodox, the Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholic; but there are also Islamic Croats and Serbs, and there are Jews and Islamized Jews.

Three-quarters of the population are directly dependent upon agriculture and forestry—but there are national antagonisms even here. Serbia is a land of small independent farmers, with a few large estates. In Macedonia, the Begs still rule, in a semi-feudal manner, over the serf-like "Haks," the landless or poor peasants who have to lease their soil. Dalmatian and Bosnian peasants live under similar circumstances; whereas Croatia is the country of wealthy farmers, rich estates, and small independent peasants with better farming equipment than any other section of Yugoslavia.

Wheat and corn are the main crops in the east. The south and west produce cattle. Belgrade is the capital; but Zagreb is the richest city.

The Danube and the Vardar are the two big means of transport for Serbian crops and commerce. They lead respectively to the Black and the Aegean Seas. The Croatian lines of commerce and communication, on the other hand, lead to the Adriatic and to Austria, Germany, and Hungary.

The exploitation of the rich mineral resources and the establishment of industries were undertaken by Austrian and German capital in the western and northern part; and by French, British, and Belgian investors in the south and east.

BIRTH OF THE SOUTH SLAV NATION

The modern national states of Europe were born in different ways. In France, for instance, the Great Revolution of 1789 united the "French peoples" into "*la Nation Française*." But the establishment of the national state of the Southern Slavs resembled, in many ways, the foundation of modern Germany and Italy; it took place under the auspices of a dynasty. In Italy, it was the House of Savoia; in Germany, the House of Hohenzollern; and in Yugoslavia, the House of Karageorgevitch. Very much as was the case in Italy, a preliminary condition of the South Slavic union was the destruction of the Hapsburg regime. But the South Slavs lacked what the Italians and Germans had at the time of the establishment of their modern national states—a powerful industry and commerce, a great urban population, and a self-conscious third estate.

In the lands of the South Slavs, the Hapsburg and Ottoman regimes had kept alive remnants of feudalism. The Bosnian *kmet* had to give up one-third of his crop to the landowner. In Dalmatia, vineyards and olive groves were leased in the manner of the old Venetian *colonat*, a sort of semi-serfdom. In Croatia and Slovenia, 209 estate-holders owned a full fourth of the arable land; whereas 300,000 peasants owned only another fourth. Serbia, on the contrary, was the country of small independent farmers. It was no wonder that the hopes of the *kmets* and *colons* turned to that country.

At the bottom of all the dreams and actions tending toward the unity of the South Slavs, burned the desire for a union of peasant brother peoples, free from foreign oppression, free from serfdom. It was not by chance that in the first manifesto issued after the establishment of the new Yugoslav State, the promise was given that all big estates would be broken up, and all remnants of feudalism abolished: "Every Serb, Croat, and Slovene shall be a free man on his free soil."

Ethnologically, all Southern Slavs are of the same origin. Even the most widely separated tribes are no more different from each other than the Castillians and Andalusians in Spain; or the Bavarians and Frisians in Germany. Different historical developments did not allow them, however, to grow in unity. In the course of time, three branches of the Southern Slav language developed into different literary languages. This is not difficult to understand when one realizes that the frontier between the Western and Eastern Roman Empires cut straight through the area inhabited by the Southern Slavs. The Bulgarians and Serbs were drawn into the orbit of Byzantine culture, whereas the Croats and the Slovenes went along with the West Roman civilization. Later on, the frontier between the Ottoman and the Hapsburg Empires again cut through the South Slav territory. Finally, the policy of the Great Powers in establishing various small dynastic puppet-states fostered the growth of differences and cleavages among the South Slavic peo-

ples. Thus, instead of a common South Slav national idea, the divergent aspirations of a Greater Serbian, a Greater Bulgarian, and a Greater Croatian nationalism grew up.

ANCIENT GRANDEUR OF CROATIA

The Croats had their great Croatian Empire in the early years of the tenth century. In 1102 they were conquered by the Hungarians, but kept certain autonomous rights and their own legislative assemblies. The Turks were never able to occupy the whole of Croatia, but they succeeded in taking Slovenia in 1526. Croatians were in the vanguard of the Hapsburg armies which drove the Sultan's troops back, and planted the yellow-black eagle banner of Austria's greatest warrior, Prince Eugene, on the walls of the Turkish citadel of Belgrade, in August 1717.

In 1867, when the Hapsburg Monarchy was re-formed into a dual state, Croatia was given to the Hungarian part, but still preserved a certain autonomy. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Hungarians tried very hard to denationalize the Croatians, but the latter put up a stubborn resistance. Out of this fight for the defense of Croatian autonomy grew the desire for absolute independence from Hungarian rule, and for unity with their Serbian brothers across the border.

For some time, plans to convert Austria into a triune monarchy, consisting of Austria, Hungary, and a South Slav section, were cherished by the majority of the Cro-

atian and Slovene politicians. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir apparent to the Hapsburg throne, fostered this plan, which was considered an effective antidote for the "poison of union with the Serbs." The plan never got beyond the point of being a rather hazy idea. Still, the fear of it was one of the reasons behind the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Bosnian and Serbian terrorists—members of a secret society of which we will hear later.

During the World War, the first big insurgence against the Hapsburg regime occurred in South Slav waters. In the early days of 1918, sailors of the Imperial and Royal Hapsburg Navy stationed in the Bay of Cattaro mutinied. The revolt was suppressed, and four sailors, two of whom had Croatian names, were executed. A few months later, when the end of the Hapsburg Monarchy was in sight, a Croatian regiment mutinied in Fiume and gave the signal for the general dissolution of army and state.

DALMATIA, BOSNIA, HERZEGOVINA

Dalmatia, part of the old Croatian Empire, had its own variegated history. The Turks occupied the interior, the Venetians the coast, with the exception of the city of Dubrovnik or Ragusa, which was an independent republic. Napoleon gave Dalmatia to Austria in 1797; then, in 1805, to the vice-Kingdom of Italy; finally, in 1809, to the short-lived Illyrian Kingdom. In 1814, after the fall of the Corsican, Austria took over Dalmatia and kept it

until the double-headed eagle of the Hapsburgs died in 1918.

Bosnia and Herzegovina were Serbian in the twelfth century; then they became a Hungarian dependency, only to be overrun and conquered by the Turks in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The great Bosnian revolt of 1875 was the prelude to the Russo-Turkish wars of 1876 to 1879. At the end of these wars the Congress of Berlin established an Austro-Hungarian administration for the two provinces, under the suzerainty of the Sultan. This arrangement was abolished in 1908 when the Hapsburgs formally incorporated Bosnia and Herzegovina into their Monarchy.

CRNA GORA

On October 29, 1918, the "National Council" of the Austrian South Slavs proclaimed the independence of the "territories of Croatia, Slovenia, Fiume, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Istria, Gorizia, and Voivodina," and declared its readiness to enter into a federation with the Serbs and Montenegrins.

Peculiar geographical conditions and historical events made the Black Mountains, "Crna Gora," the cradle of liberty for those parts of the Yugoslav peoples who were under the Turkish yoke. Although the Turks conquered the Black Mountains, they could not establish permanent rule. In the fifteenth century, the Venetians garrisoned their troops there and gave the country an Italian name,

Montenegro. In the seventeenth century a native chieftain shook off the obligation to pay tribute to the Sultan, and successfully defended the country against his Bashi-Bazouks.

In 1851 an independent Principality of Montenegro was proclaimed and officially recognized by Turkey and the Great Powers. In 1912, it was Montenegro which opened the war of the Balkan Allies against the Sultan. During the World War, the country was overrun by the Austrians, but when the Austrian Empire cracked, and the Hapsburg armies disbanded, Serbian troops entered Montenegro.

The wave of enthusiasm for Southern Slav unity ran high in those days. A broad autonomy was promised to the Montenegrins. The few oppositional voices were drowned in the joyous chorus of acclamation when the incorporation of Montenegro into the Yugoslav State was proclaimed. The promised autonomy was, however, never granted.

KARAGEORGEVITCH AND OBRENOVITCH

The Serbs can boast of a continuous national identity since the twelfth century, when they rid themselves of the overlordship of Byzantium. Between 1331 and 1335, Stefan Dushan founded a Greater Serbian Empire, comprising Serbia, Macedonia, and Albania. But the year 1389 saw the destruction of Serbian independence. The battle on the "Plain of the Blackbirds"—Kosovo Polje—

marked the beginning of the Turkish regime. To this day, the Serbian peasant girls sing the old sad songs about the flower of Serbian youth killed on the Blackbird Plain:

> That night came two black ravens
> from Kosovo Field,
> And round about the tower, in the
> red dawn they wheeled.

Serbia was not a pleasant *pashalik* to govern. Time and again the Serbs struck back. Bands of sharp-shooters went into the mountains and plundered Turkish caravans and houses.

In 1804, Black George, "Kara George," swineherd and chieftain of a band of robbers and rebels, led a countrywide uprising. The Sultan, unable to defeat him by force of arms, found a weapon in the rivalry between Black George and another swineherd and clan chieftain, Milosh Obrenovitch. In return for the promise of autonomy, Milosh Obrenovitch sent the Sultan the head of Kara George, and thus began a century-long bitter feud between the families of Karageorgevitch and Obrenovitch.

Milosh got the autonomy and the title of "Gospodar"—Prince. He sent the Sublime Porte letters of loyalty and maintained secret envoys at the Court of the Russian Tsar. He bribed viziers and pashas, raised foodstuffs for the Turkish armies and smuggled them into the hands of the Russians, getting paid by both sides. He collected

taxes in good Maria Theresa ducats and sent them to Istanbul in bad piasters; he destroyed Serbian salt mines because he owned shares in Rumanian ones. He hanged his own brother and had his father poisoned and ended up as "Milosh the Liberator," blessed by two Archbishops and cursed by the common folk.

In 1867 full independence was proclaimed by Michael Obrenovitch, who was killed a year later by the adherents of the Karageorgevitch family. A slaughter of the latter followed. The feud went on.

Serbia's independence and continuous growth were mainly a by-product of the struggle of the Hapsburgs, the Tsars, and the Sultans over the Balkans; Serbia profiting from the Austrian desire to have a springboard to the southeast. The Obrenovitch dynasty knew how to capitalize on this desire. For decades Viennese gold rolled into the treasury in the Konak, the Castle of Belgrade.

In 1903, an end was put to the dynasty of the Obrenovitches and its pro-Austrian policy. King Alexander and Queen Draga were killed by an officers' conspiratorial organization called the "Black Hand." The oppositional Radical Party, which had remained in the background of the bloody palace revolution, called a Karageorgevitch from his Swiss exile to Serbia's throne.

This exile, Peter, had been a Komitadje in Bosnia, fighting against the Turks. Forced to flee, he had gone to France and joined the army of Napoleon III in the war against Prussia. Later he had lived in Zurich, mingled with Russian nihilists and French Bohemians, and trans-

lated Mill's *Essay on Liberty*. He was sixty when he received the call from Belgrade to take his place in the palace—still red with the blood of King Alexander and his wife. When Peter arrived in Serbia, the English Minister indignantly left, and the diplomatic corps did not attend his coronation.

NIKOLA PASHITCH

The man who called Peter Karageorgevitch back home from exile was Nikola Pashitch, another of the picturesque, uncrowned kings of Balkan policy in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries. Tall, broad-shouldered, bearded, even in his top hat and dress coat adorned with the great crosses and stars of many European orders, he retained the appearance of a powerful *starost*, the chief of a village clan—full of patriarchal wisdom and shrewdness and peasant distrust.

Pashitch was born the son of a poor farmer, under Ottoman rule. His enemies have intimated that "he was of Turkish origin, and thus accounted for the despotic temperament which enabled him to rule his Serbia with an iron rod for over twenty years." [1] His mother was a Bulgarian, and all his life he mixed up Serbian and Bulgarian words. He studied engineering in Switzerland, where he became acquainted with the ideas of Russian anarchists, followers of Bakunin.

[1] Count Sforza, *Makers of Europe*.

In 1880, Pashitch, together with his friend Velimirovitch, founded a nationalistic, progressive party, which vehemently fought the ruling house of the Obrenovitches and their Austria-oriented policy. In 1885 he opposed the war against the Bulgarians, which had been declared on the instigation of Vienna. He was forced to flee, and from his Bulgarian exile he directed a fierce campaign against King Milan Obrenovitch, the Serbian Government, and the pro-Austrian "war party." His strongly worded pamphlets and manifestoes would certainly have been banned, and their author persecuted for "Communist" activity, by the Pashitch of later years and his followers in the premiership—all members of the same Radical Party.

THE BLACK HAND

"Pashitch's strength in politics was not so much in action," says one of his biographers, "as intrigue behind the scenes, as well as the enviable quality of possessing no nerves." One of the most powerful tools in his hands was a secret society called the "Black Hand."

The nucleus of this organization was created about the beginning of this century for the express purpose of doing away with the Obrenovitches. An army captain, Dragutin Dimitriyevitch, a friend of the Tsar's envoy and an intimate of Nikola Pashitch, was the soul of the conspiracy. Bull-like, with a shaven skull, a round face, turned-up mustaches, and a protruding, dimpled chin,

he looked more like a sergeant of the Tsar's Cossack bodyguard than a well-educated specialist in high strategy and tactics. He was daring and foolhardy; but still methodical, with an enormous capacity for labor. His friends called him "Apis," the Bee.

On June 11, 1903, Captain Dimitriyevitch led a carefully selected group of conspirators to the Konak, the royal castle of Belgrade. Pera Zhivkovitch, a young lieutenant of the guard who was later to play a decisive role both in the history of the country and in the life and death of Apis, with shaking arms opened the door to the Black Hand officers. "Do not tremble like a girl, you will drop the key!" gibed Apis, thus beginning a lifelong hidden enmity.

When the conspirators entered the Konak, to their astonishment they found the royal bedroom empty. But one of the party discovered a crack in the wallpaper which betrayed a door to a secret room. In they went, and espied the royal couple hiding in nightgowns behind a bed. Twenty minutes later, the bodies of King Alexander and Queen Draga, riddled with bullets and slashed by swords, were thrown out into the street. The way was clear for a new Radical Government and a new foreign policy.

The envoy of the Tsar, watching the scene from behind a curtained window of his embassy, sent out two lackeys—one with a sheet to cover the two bodies, and the other with a letter to Pashitch. An hour later Pashitch came, pale and nervous.

"It is terrible, Your Excellency. They have killed each other in drunkenness!"

"Oh, did they?" answered the envoy. "It's very unfortunate. But let's turn to the future."

In 1908, when Austria-Hungary incorporated the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, until then held only as mandates, into the Dual Monarchy, anti-Austrian feeling ran high in Serbia. Dimitriyevitch and his friends saw the time ripe for transforming their small conspiratorial group into a bigger organization.

This organization took on the name of Ujedinjenje ili Smrt"—"Unity or Death." Its aims were: "The fight for, and the realization of, the union of all South Slavs under the direction of the Kingdom of Serbia, which must be considered as the Piedmont of a Greater Serbia." [1] Its emblem was a clenched fist grasping a flag with the skull and crossbones, a knife, a bomb, and a flask of poison.

The newspaper *Piedmont* was founded, schools for Komitadjis were established, and anti-Austrian pamphlets were printed and smuggled across the border. In 1914 the organization had 60,000 members in Serbia, and agents in all parts of the South Slav provinces of Austria and Hungary.

The men who threw the bombs and fired the fatal shots of Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, killing Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, were sent by Unity or Death, perhaps without the express knowledge of Pashitch and

[1] Piedmont was the nucleus of modern Italy during the struggle for national unity.

the Government, but certainly with the help of the highest ranking officers and officials.

The fact that Dimitriyevitch knew too much, and the bitter rivalry of Pera Zhivkovitch, the former lieutenant who was now the head of another secret officers' organization called the "White Hand," caused the downfall of Apis. He was indicted for "republican activities" and a "plan to kill Crown Prince Alexander." On June 26, 1917, he was shot near Salonica. When he stepped down into the grave which had been dug for his execution, he said calmly to the officer commanding the firing squad: "I'm afraid you will have to dig some more. I should dislike the idea of not having enough room under the earth."

THE SERBO-CROATIAN PACT

Just about that time, Serbia was being conquered by the Central Powers. Pashitch, with an exiled government, sat on the Island of Corfu, and there seemed little hope that the two forlorn Serbian divisions, which stood at the Salonica front of the Allies, would ever return victorious to the homeland. A separate peace with Austria and Germany was not out of the realm of possibility and conjecture. The execution of Apis, who had engineered the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, could prove useful in the event of peace negotiations. So it is quite understandable that Pashitch should make a somewhat

ambiguous reference to the "double usefulness" of Apis's death.

But Pashitch wouldn't have been Pashitch if he had not had two irons in the fire; while he was playing with the idea of a separate peace with Austria, he also concluded a pact with the anti-Austrian Croatian exiles. This was the "Pact of Corfu," which later played an important part in the Serbo-Croatian conflict.

The pact was a compromise between two opposite conceptions of a South Slav State composed of Serbia and the liberated South Slav provinces of Austria-Hungary. Pashitch saw this state only as Greater Serbia. The Croatians and Slovenes wanted a federation with equal rights for each member. Pashitch agreed, but only after a bitter dispute, to make an oral promise of Croatian and Slovenian autonomy as members of a federation, but he formulated the pact so that it provided merely for a "constitutional democratic parliamentary monarchy, with a constituent assembly elected by universal, secret, and direct suffrage."

When, in the Autumn of 1918, the downfall of Austria made possible the realization of South Slav unity, Pashitch, pointing to the written words of the Corfu pact and using the military power of Serbia and the threat of an Italian invasion of Croatia, cheated his "liberated brothers." Crown Prince Regent Alexander proclaimed the South Slav Union within the boundaries of a centralized state under Serbian leadership.

This was the birth of Yugoslavia,[1] and at the same time the seed of the conflict between the Serbs and the Slovenes and Croatians, which was to poison the whole history of the new state and prove fatal in 1941. In a strange way, the slogan of Pashitch's Black Hand, "Unity *or* Death," was to come true: since unity was not attained, death was the alternative.

One of the members of the Croatian delegation which went to Belgrade to negotiate the basis of a South Slav federation, and was cheated by Pashitch and the Crown, was Ante Pavelitch. The shock he received in Belgrade turned him to a course of violent hatred, terrorism, and separatism. We shall meet him later in our story as the leader of the Ustashi, who engineered the assassination of King Alexander in 1934; and again as the chief of the Croatian State created by Hitler and Mussolini after the invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941.

But Pavelitch and his small nationalistic party, and later on his terroristic Ustashi organization, were not in the forefront of the Croatian struggle against Belgrade. This fight was mainly carried on by the big Peasant Party under the leadership of Stepan Raditch and Dr. Matchek.

LITTLE FATHER STEPAN RADITCH

Raditch was carved of the same wood as the "peasant lion," Stamboliski of Bulgaria, and he met the same end through assassination. He was stocky, with a little Van

[1] Yugoslavia means the country of the Southern Slavs.

Dyke beard, and a bushy mustache hanging over his upper lip. His eyes, slightly veiled, had an unforgettable smiling charm. He looked like a peasant doctor or peasant lawyer. The language he spoke was that of the plain village folk, decorated with metaphors out of nature and the everyday life of the peasant. I once watched him address a meeting of about two thousand small farmers. He began his speech with the words, "Blessed be the name of Jesus—down with the priests!" So fascinated was his audience that at the end of his discourse all knelt down and blessed him. Years after his death I found his picture in peasant dwellings in Dalmatia and Croatia, beside the holy ikons and behind the eternal lamp.

Raditch had a stormy life. As a student he led a demonstration against a Hungarian governor who had tried to Magyarize the Croats. He was expelled from schools and run out of cities. He studied in Prague, Moscow, Budapest, and Paris. He founded the Peasant Party of Croatia with the slogan, "Peasant government, peasant administration, peasant parliament." On the eve of the First World War, he was an ardent fighter for the idea of a triune Hapsburg Monarchy, "Neither German, nor Magyar, nor Slav; but Christian, European, and democratic." Three years later he advocated a "nationalist, Slavic revolt" against Austria-Hungary and federal union with the Serbs.

As early as December 1919, he took on the leadership of the Croatian opposition against Belgrade. From then on he spent as much time in jail and abroad as home in

Yugoslavia, with a short intermezzo as Minister in a Belgrade government.

When he was imprisoned in 1919, more than 200,000 Croatian peasants sent a petition to Woodrow Wilson, asking the liberation of "Little Father Raditch." He was liberated, and went to Paris and London, where the governments that had helped to deliver Yugoslavia paid no heed to his complaints in the name of the Croatian people. He went to Moscow, where he was fascinated by the policy for national minorities and the agricultural legislation of the Soviets. Back home, he was again arrested.

The so-called Vidovdan Constitution of 1921 (Vidovdan means Saint Vitus Day), stating that there was only one nation and establishing a centralized state, was never recognized by the non-Serb nationalities, since it had been voted upon by only 205 deputies, the 153 Croatian deputies having been absent in protest and the 58 Communist deputies having been deprived by decree of their seats in the Chamber. Unrest continued in Croatia. The Peasant Party was outlawed, a reign of terror established. Clashes with the Serbian authorities increased from month to month. The Croatian question became the crucial problem of Yugoslavia.

In 1925, the Radical Party had to abandon the government for a short time because of the general discontent and disorder in the country. The new democratic prime minister, Davidovitch, held new elections, which brought an overwhelming victory for Raditch in Croatia. He was liberated, and drove directly from prison to an

audience with King Alexander. He became a member of the government, but resigned after six months because of the impossibility of furthering the project of Croatian autonomy against the sabotage of the almighty Radical Party and the Royal Court.

In 1926, Raditch's great enemy, Pashitch, died; but the regime remained the same. The chances for a Serbo-Croatian reconciliation became slimmer and slimmer, and sustained a fatal blow when Raditch was shot in the Chamber on June 20, 1928, by Deputy Punisha Ratchitch, an old protégé of King Alexander, and a member of the Pashitch party. Raditch lingered on for six weeks, and then died of his wounds. The Croatian deputies left the parliament and stayed away for years.

ROYAL DICTATORSHIP

Meanwhile, the international crisis was growing. In the first decade of the existence of Yugoslavia, the government used up 130 Cabinet Ministers. The Radical Party had degenerated into one of those abjectly corrupt and reactionary political machines so typical of Balkan political history. It ruled the country through terror and bribery.[1] The national minorities were in an uproar; the

[1] The League of Human Rights stated in 1938 that the Glavnyacha—the Belgrade police headquarters for "political criminals"—had committed "more than five hundred murders only in order to smooth the way for candidates of the ruling Radical Party in the last four elections." Pashitch, founder and leader of the party, was penniless when he entered the government in 1903. In 1926 he died leaving several estates, a castle, and copper mine stocks amounting to 80,000,000 dinars in value.

poor peasants, rebellious. One financial scandal followed another.

In this situation, King Alexander, on January 6, 1929, proclaimed his personal dictatorship, with General Pera Zhivkovitch of the "White Hand" as Prime Minister. A new Constitution was decreed. The Government naturally won the elections. In the royal manifestoes, rule and order reigned in Yugoslavia. All was so well arranged in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia that one beautiful day in 1931 General Zhivkovitch had to resign and certain dictatorial measures had to be curtailed because of too dangerous tension in all parts of Yugoslavia.

All attempts to appease the Croatians by cajolery and coercion had failed. In several solemn statements, the deputies of Croatia, boycotting the Belgrade parliament, had stated that with the assassination of Raditch and the declaration of a royal dictatorship, "all feelings of the Croatian people for the Yugoslav State have vanished." In two notes to the League of Nations, they declared: "King Alexander has broken the promise given on December 1, 1918, to the representatives of the National Council of the Croats and Slovenes, namely, to govern constitutionally, always, and to obey the supreme laws of the country. He has proclaimed himself an absolute monarch. . . . Although the Croats, in accordance with secular tradition, wished to fight only with legal means, they are forced to use other means at a moment when legality is liquidated by the King."

PAVELITCH AND THE USTASHI

It was at this time that the terrorist society—Ustashi—was organized on the pattern of the Macedonian IMRO. Its leader was Ante Pavelitch, Croatian deputy and lawyer. In 1929 he defended twenty Macedonian students in a mass trial at Skoplje. There he made his first contacts with IMRO leaders, and a visit to IMRO headquarters in Bulgaria followed. In a joint declaration of Pavelitch, his friend Pertchetz, and the leaders of IMRO, both parties stated their will to "co-ordinate the fight for the human and national rights, the political freedom, and the entire independence of Croatia and Macedonia."

The Belgrade tribunal thereupon sentenced Pavelitch and Pertchetz to death—*in absentia*. Both fled to Italy, where they were given asylum. Pavelitch was given a villa at Pesaro, an Italian passport, and funds for drilling his Ustashi at Borgotaro, Italy, and in Yanka Puszta, Hungary. The Yugoslav authorities inaugurated a ferocious terror campaign in Croatia against all persons suspected of having sympathies with Pavelitch. Hundreds were imprisoned, scores were killed. Pavelitch in turn wrote in 1933: "We condemn Alexander the Last to death."

In October, 1934, Alexander "the Unifier" was killed in Marseille by a Macedonian IMRO man, Vlada Tchernozemski "the Chauffeur," who had been lent to the organization of Ante Pavelitch. Before Vlada killed the King, he had, for some time, been the instructor of Ustashi terrorist bands drilling in Hungary and Italy. The

arms had come from Nazi Germany; the money from Fascist Italy.

After the assassination of Alexander, his brother Paul became regent for the minor King Peter. Educated at the Tsarist Court, Prince Paul was no less reactionary than his brother; but he was not quite so strong. He also had to deal with a more complex international situation. First, Paul tried to wipe out the opposition through totalitarian methods. For some time he flirted with the idea of a fascist corporative state; then he was forced onto the path of compromise. The "White Hand" generals disappeared from the government, and as in the times before the royal dictatorship, the Radical Party furnished its politicians as prime ministers.

"LUCKY MILAN" STOYADINOVITCH

Milan Stoyadinovitch, former private secretary to old Pashitch—"Lucky Milan," big businessman and gambler, with the smile of a shrewd horse merchant who has just successfully cheated a competitor—tried to steer the Yugoslav ship of state through the rough waters of international conflict, of untamed Croatians, and of the beginnings of the great European storm. But this was not so easy as the successful management of stock speculation in the insurance business, which had brought Lucky Milan the trifle of 20,000,000 dinars in five years; more difficult than the "transformation" of the governmental

newspaper *Vreme* into a private company with Lucky Milan and Herr von Krupp as its main stockholders.[1] Promises and goodwill gestures failed to make the Croatian opposition soften its attitude. The changed international situation had stiffened their spines.

From 1934 on, Nazi imperialism began to make inroads in Yugoslav economic life similar to those it had made in other Balkan countries. The formation of the Berlin-Rome Axis in 1936 put an end to the foreign policy followed up to then by Belgrade, namely, to play off Italy against Germany and vice-versa. French and British diplomatic maneuvers encouraging Hitler to push toward the East and Southeast, accelerated this shift in Yugoslavia's course. Until then, the policy of Belgrade had been based upon the French alliance, the Little Entente, and the League of Nations. Now, the government of Stoyadinovitch initiated a policy of balance, very similar to that of Poland. Italian and German influence grew, and this in turn gave the Croatians a chance to press their claims against the Serbs.

DR. MATCHEK AND PRINCE PAUL

Raditch's successor was Dr. Matchek. Squarely built, not very tall, gray-haired, bespectacled, with a little mus-

[1] The French magazine *L'Europe Nouvelle* called Stoyadinovitch "a perfect combination of Stavisky, Oustric, and Madame Hanau," the heroes of the three biggest financial scandals of the post-war history of France. Stoyadinovitch had been a rich man before he became Prime Minister. As president of the Belgrade Stock Exchange he had maintained profitable

tache—he might be a Croatian village priest. He does not have the passionate eloquence and the vehement temperament of Raditch. Till now, he has called himself merely the vice-president of the Peasant Party; the spirit of dead Stepan Raditch is still the nominal president.

The Balkan peasant, even in Croatia, is in many respects undeveloped and backward. This expresses itself in the policy of Dr. Matchek. There are many vacillations—from the open threat of a Croatian rebellion to participation in a Belgrade government; from republicanism to the oath of loyalty to the dynasty of Karageorgevitch; from alliance with the progressive Serbian Liberals and the outlawed Communists to flirtations with Pavelitch and the Nazis; from the assertion in February 1939 that "the Croats are now the Sudeten Germans of Yugoslavia" to the signing of an agreement with the Belgrade government a few months later, and Matchek's acceptance of the vice-premiership.

In order to come to this agreement, Stoyadinovitch had to make room for another man of the Radical Party, Cvetkovitch, less exposed in the fight against the Croatians, but equally resolved to tie Yugoslavia up with the Axis. Still, the agreement with the Croatians, signed in the summer of 1939, was only a truce, not a peace—as was proven by the events in the spring of 1941.

The changed relations between Germany and the

connections with Herr von Krupp and with Sir Henri Deterding. In 1937 he was Yugoslavia's richest man, with a fortune of 350,000,000 dinars.

Soviet Union made it possible for the Cvetkovitch government to alter the Government's attitude toward Moscow. In spite of a growing public demand for the establishment of normal, even friendly, relations with the great Slavic power to the northeast, the Belgrade Government had for years observed an attitude of stubborn enmity. This was due, in a great measure, to Prince Regent Paul.

The Prince, a cousin of late King Alexander, looks like a Viennese "café-intellectual." His hobbies are art-collecting and linguistics. He is the brother-in-law of the Duke of Kent, and also of the Nazi prince Toering. Born in St. Petersburg and related to the Romanov family, Prince Paul was always very close to the aristocrats and officers of the Russian emigration who had found a friendly reception in Belgrade. These friendships and the relationship to the Tsar's family had imbued the Prince Regent with bitter hatred for the Bolsheviks. "He cannot forget the confiscation of the beautiful Demidov estates," wrote a French diplomat after an interview with the Prince Regent in 1938, "whence a good deal of his bitter feelings against the Soviets."

Paul's hatred was shared by a second member of the Regency Council, Patriarch Varnava, a member of the old Russian Orthodox hierarchy. With Varnava dead and the Second World War unleashed, and the danger of invasion coming nearer, Prince Paul gave up his angry resistance, and the Belgrade government hurried to turn to friendly relations with the Soviets.

NAZI SHADOWS OVER BELGRADE

At the same time, however, fascist methods in the realm of foreign and internal policy were continued. Although Milan Stoyadinovitch was sent to the little town of Rudniki, to be confined there, it turned out later that the only conflict between Lucky Milan and the Cvetkovitch Government was over the tempo of Nazification. In compliance with Nazi wishes, the Belgrade Government delivered the grains, foodstuffs, and raw materials of Yugoslavia to the Axis; with the result that the cost of living jumped every month, and that a shortage of materials in industry caused considerable unemployment. The reforms promised by the Cvetkovitch-Matchek Cabinet in August 1939—freedom of press and assembly—were not forthcoming. The Cabinet governed without Parliament, and all elections were postponed. The Government even went so far as to adopt anti-Semitic decrees, and to close the universities when the students protested against the breaking of all its promises.

When, in the last days of March 1941, the Cvetkovitch Government, after having signed a pact of adherence with the Axis, was smashed by a coup led by General Dushan Simovitch, the latter and his Government could not save Yugoslavia. They were in the same position as, a year before, Mandel and Reynaud had been in France.

Honest nationalists, and personally opposed to Nazism, they had for too long a time witnessed in silence the destruction of the anti-fascist forces within the country.

When they came to power, they discovered that fascism could be opposed only when the people felt that there was something worth defending. Liberty inside Yugoslavia had been trampled for too many years. The men who finally called upon the people to stand up in defense of national independence had done too little to strengthen it from within.

So the collapse came with merciless rapidity.

PART III

Of Storms to Come and Seeds of the Future

CHAPTER 10

THE SLEEPING GIANT

"The peasant, this Robespierre with one head and twenty million arms. . . ."

—BALZAC

In the fall of 1936 I heard Eleutherios Venizelos talk about what he called the "fatal question of Southern Europe" to a small group of journalists and writers in Paris. The Tiger of Crete was then an old man, defeated and broken, already marked for death. He spoke in a low voice, with tired gestures. Only toward the end of his discourse did the old passionate temperament flare up.

He blamed himself for not having brought the "Big Four" of the Versailles Peace Conference—Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Orlando—to an understanding of the peasant Southeast of Europe. He saw the clouds of a new world war looming over the horizon,

and he ventured the prophecy that "the peasant countries of Southern Europe, from the Balkans up to the Carpathians and Sudetes, and farther up to the Baltic Sea, will play a decisive role in that war; and even more, in the arranging of peace after that war. The status of Central and Western Europe will depend on the position and disposition of those countries, on the solution of the question of the peasant Southeast, in and after the war."

RURAL EUROPE

The fact that the Balkan countries and the adjoining areas of the Danube Basin—what might be called the Middle East of Europe—have a total population more than three-quarters peasant is indeed of the utmost importance and involves primary problems whose importance has for long been greatly underestimated.[1]

This mass of several dozen millions constitutes the fastest-growing population of Europe, with the exception of the European parts of the Soviet Union. One hundred and fifty years ago, only an eighth of Europe's inhabitants lived in this region, whereas today the figure is between a quarter and a third.

Until almost the present day the peasant millions of Southeastern Europe have remained a "sleeping giant."

[1] The percentages of peasantry in the populations of the Balkans and some adjoining areas to the northeast are as follows: Albania, 90; Bulgaria, 82; Turkey, 81; Rumania, 81; Yugoslavia, 76; Greece, 67; Slovakia, 59; Hungary, 58; German-occupied Poland, the so-called General Government of Poland, 58; Bohemia and Moravia, 45.

As the report of an American Balkan observer, Professor J. S. Roucek of New York University, puts it:

The masses of the people count politically for little in the lives of the countries. The world of which the modern Balkans are a part, is outside their scope. They have almost no share in it, except by grudgingly giving up their taxes and serving in the armies. They live by what centuries of experience have taught them to be the way of man under the sun. Humility, obedience, deference—these are their lot, and man's lot has been fixed as the course of the sun and the stars is fixed. Still, the Balkan peasant is becoming restive. The World War and Russian Revolution have aroused the peasantry to a sense of political power, and it begins to move."

HUMAN VALUES IN THE BALKANS

What is the peasant's life like in most of the Balkan and adjoining areas? The American reader can hardly imagine the depths of poverty and the measure of misery which confine the life of the Balkan peasant to a stony, steep, almost invisible goat path in the Karst Mountains or in the Macedonian highlands.

What F. T. Birchall wrote at the end of 1937 in the New York *Times* about the Yugoslav peasant, is true for his Bulgarian, Albanian, Rumanian, and Grecian brother: "They have meat only once a week. Their clothing is patched and worn to the last thread, and their children are underfed and go barefooted."

On the Dalmatian shores the sea provides fish, but I have seen villages which contained only one overcoat and one pair of boots for all its men. At the other end of this southeastern area, in Carpathian Russia, formerly Czechoslovakian and today under Hungarian occupation, I remember hungry peasant children spitting out the sugar given them by a Red Cross mission because they had never tasted anything sweet. To this very day you can see the "cocoa doors" of villages on the Verchovina Plain where the peasants, ignorant of the use of the cocoa, distributed to them by relief agencies, took it for brown paint and daubed the doors of their huts with it.

A recent medical survey found that 40 percent of the young men in all Dalmatian villages were unfit for military service because of tuberculosis and malaria brought on by malnutrition and poor housing. Thirty percent of all rural dwellings in Rumania are built of mud and clay and consist of but a single room for men and cattle. In Macedonia you may find in every village huts perched on four stilts, woven of switches, plastered with mud, and covered with straw. Even in Croatia there is for the most part only one bed for each entire peasant family. In Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia, the majority of the peasants do not know mattresses or even straw sacks; their beds are mere wooden planks, often simply the floor, with a stone to serve as pillow.

From the Carpathians to the Adriatic the main food is a sort of boiled cornmeal pudding called *mamaliga* in Rumania, *polenta* in Dalmatia, and *pura* in Bosnia. This is

the bread of the Balkans. Many of the peasants never eat meat. I once heard a young woman in Rumania sigh: "I wish I could once know the taste of pork." Since she was in the very act of feeding a pig, I asked in astonishment how it came that she had never tasted it. The answer was: "The pig is being raised to pay taxes."

Onions and garlic are both primary foods and delicacies. A Bulgarian peasant family will consume an average of 120 pounds of onions and 60 pounds of garlic a year. On the other hand, an old Macedonian children's song goes: "The angels smell sweet of onions."

Eggs, like pigs, are a sort of currency in peasant countries. The Rumanian peasant has to collect sixty eggs to buy two pounds of oil, besides which it often takes him a whole day to reach the nearest city, sell the eggs, and buy the oil. So most Rumanian villages lie dark at nightfall—and Rumania is the land of oil. In Bulgaria two pounds of oil costs the peasant sixty-six eggs, or six chickens.

To buy a pair of shoes the Rumanian peasant must work forty-five days; the Bulgarian, thirty-five; and the Macedonian seventy. The Bosnian peasant has to give up two pounds of wool for two pounds of nails, and 225 pounds of wheat for a pair of shoes. And the Carpathian-Russian buys two barrels of salt water (instead of salt) with two days of wood chopping.

Matches are precious. Each match is split into four sections for economy. In Dalmatia two boxes of matches are worth forty-four pounds of barley. The use of flint for making fire is forbidden throughout the Balkans, because

the government's monopoly on the sale of matches is important to its revenues. If a Rumanian peasant is caught using flint, he is fined from one to five thousand lei, equal in value to one to three cows.

The peasant Gekov, of the village of Bistrica, selected by an international commission for agricultural studies as an average Bulgarian peasant, possesses 9 acres of arable land; but he cultivates only half of it—the other half lying fallow. He must plow four times, because the soil is very poor and exhausted. He cannot buy artificial fertilizer. If the crop is good, he will harvest less than five tons of grain. This will give him less than nine pounds of flour a day throughout the year. His family consists of twelve members, and every person consumes two and a quarter pounds of flour per day. So, in addition to farming, the head of the family has to work in a stone pit. His daughters, from the age of eight up, go to Sofia as servants. The boys are shepherds by the age of six.

In thirsty Dalmatia, water is the most precious thing. Sometimes twenty-four hours of one man's hard labor are required to get a day's supply of water for a peasant family in the Karst Mountains. In the Carpathian-Russian Mountains, on the other hand, rainfall is the poor peasant's bitterest enemy. Each year the autumn rains wash the fields from the slopes, and the peasant must restore the soil of his "wandering fields" by carrying it up to his land again in huge baskets on his back.

Modern machinery is unknown to the great majority of

Balkan peasants. For the most part, primitive tools are still in use. More than 750,000 wooden plows are still turning the fields of Balkan peasants, as in the times of primitive agriculture. In Yugoslavia, a duty of 300 dinars had to be paid on the smallest iron plow, while the entire production of iron plows in the country amounted to fifty per year. The duty was to "protect" this infant industry against foreign competition. In most cases, Balkan peasants are too poor to renew their farm implements without the aid of a loan, whence comes one source of the terrible indebtedness of the villages in the peasant Southeast of Europe. In 1923, 800,000 peasant holdings in Bulgaria had only 280,000 plows.

"Too poor to own a plow, or even a horse, they are nevertheless not too poor to work for six months of the year for the benefit of the most corrupt bureaucracy in all Europe," writes H. H. Tiltman in a study of the living conditions of the Rumanian peasant.[1] This statement holds true for the peasantry of the other Balkan countries as well.

In spite of all the agrarian reforms and the laws abolishing semi-feudal conditions, the peasant of Southern Europe still often lives like a serf. In Dalmatia, the *Tezhak*, or tenant farmer, must give up one-third of his crop to the *Gospar*, the landlord. In Bulgaria, the *Bezkutchnitzi*, farmers without a home, the Joads of that country, constituted 20 percent of all families in 1863 and 25 per-

[1] *Peasant Europe*, London, 1935.

cent in 1933. In Macedonia, the peasant has to pay from 20 to 50 percent of his yield from sales on the market for taxes and bribes. In Greece, 60 percent of the yield of vineyards goes for taxes. A Rumanian peasant who wants to sell cattle on the market must pay a baksheesh on top of the tax. Thus, two calves may bring in 1200 lei, but taxes and baksheesh devour 760 lei, leaving the peasant with barely 40 percent of the selling price for himself.

Peasant indebtedness has already been dealt with in the chapter on Rumania. Here we shall only add that, under Rumanian administration, 80 percent of all the peasants of Bukovina were in debt, 70 percent in Bessarabia, and 70 percent in Transylvania. In Greece, an average of 60 percent of the inhabitants of every village were in debt.

Svetozar Pribichevich, student of Balkan affairs and author of several books on the peasant in Southeastern Europe, has calculated that the average indebtedness of the Balkan peasant, translated into American terms and conditions, would correspond to a debt of fifty dollars for every member of every farmer's family. Against this staggering load, the migratory farmers of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Hungary are able on the average to earn about fifteen cents a day.

To the tax collector, the landlord, the baksheesh-demanding official, must be added the Church. Even the Croatian peasant, who is better off than most of his Balkan brothers, has a saying: "The monk is heavier than the tax."

REFORM PROMISES

Agrarian reforms were promised and passed by law in all the Balkan countries, but only in Bulgaria were the laws put into practice under the premiership of Alexander Stamboliski. Immediately after his assassination and the fascist putsch of 1923 the land reforms here too were liquidated. In Rumania, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Albania the agrarian reform laws have remained largely on paper. In Yugoslavia, where the union of Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs had been promoted as much with slogans of struggle for individual liberation from semi-feudal oppression as for national liberation, the land reforms were sabotaged, particularly in Bosnia and Macedonia, where the Turkish Begs had the largest estates.

Twelve of the fifteen million inhabitants of Yugoslavia are peasants, but less than four million own more than the 12½ acres of land estimated to be the necessary minimum for the subsistence of a family of five. One and a half million Yugoslav peasants cannot wrest any existence from their soil. They have to work as migratory, seasonal laborers. The average income of a peasant family in 1938 was 1100 dinars, while the average taxes were 350 dinars per adult per year.

In Rumania, 80 percent of the sixteen million peasants live on properties under the subsistence minimum. In Bulgaria, 50 percent of the peasant population own less land than is necessary to maintain the barest existence. In Albania about thirty families own almost all the good arable

land, while one million peasants work on poor soil or as tenants on the land of the Begs.

CULTURE IN THE BALKANS

The long reign of the Turks and the countless wars, instigated more often than not by the power politics of the great European empires, had a devastating effect upon the cultural standards of the Balkans. Even after the establishment of independent national states, the heritage of Turkish rule, the *Yavashluk*, the method of bungling and general neglect, continued to exist.

In 1834, the only carriage in the whole of Serbia was owned by the Prince, and even in his palace there were no beds. On his table were wooden plates. Complete, total illiteracy prevailed in his country. In 1840 there were sixty-nine teachers in the whole Principality of Serbia. The Greeks, in 1837, already had a university, but almost 90 percent of the population could neither read nor write.

The centuries-old struggle against foreign oppression has bred in the peasant of Southeastern Europe a great love for liberty and independence. Co-operation and collective solidarity were strong weapons of defense against Sultan and Hapsburg, against the Begs and the vassal princes. Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the old collective form of life and work was still practiced by the majority of the Balkan peasant population.

THE ZADRUGAS

Until 1870, most of the Balkan peasants still lived in *zadrugas*, communities of relatives who owned and worked their properties together. The zadrugas, which can still be found in parts of Serbia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria, distinguished two kinds of land: inherited land, which could not be alienated; and acquired land, which could. No individual holdings were allowed. Whatever one member earned belonged to the zadruga in common. Only clothing, lesser tools, and arms were personal property. There was no individual right of inheritance. Girls who left one zadruga to marry members of another might receive cattle, clothing, or jewelry, but never soil, as a dowry.

The zadruga was not the only form of collective life, work, and property in the Balkans. Tribal ownership of cattle land is still common in Montenegro and Albania. In Western Macedonia and in Bulgaria every inhabitant of a village has an equal right to the use of the village pastures. A co-operative organization of work in the fields is found in many parts of Yugoslavia. There is, for instance, the *moba*, in which the entire community turns out to aid in sowing and harvesting the crop of each of its members. "At the moba, the young people often organize competitions in work which are no way different from the 'socialist competition' of the kolkhozes in the Soviet Union." [1]

[1] *Studies of the Agricultural Question in the Balkans*, Prague, 1938.

PEASANT UPRISINGS

Besides the surviving examples of old forms of common work and collective life, there is the memory, still vivid in the minds of the peasants of the European Southeast, of uprisings for the ancient rights, *za staro pravdo*. Time and again the peasant rose in arms to defend these rights. In 1514, at the time of the great Peasant War in Germany, the Hungarian peasantry rose under the leadership of Dozsa Györgyei, who organized a peasant army, defeated the gentry, burned their castles, and broke up the estates, and who preached that "differences between men are not created by God, and they shall not be!"

The Croatian peasants of Carinthia revolted in 1502, 1503, 1513, and 1514. In 1537, another Croatian peasant revolt broke out, with Mathias Gubec as its leader. The Bishop of Zagreb finally caught him and had him quartered, but his memory lived, honored in countless legends and songs. As late as 1918, when the Hapsburg Monarchy dissolved and the peasants of Croatia and Slovenia rose, a standard borne aloft in a big demonstration for independence in Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, bore the words: "Look! Peasant King Mathias resurrected and liberated his people!" (The declaration of independence in October 1918 was, indeed, followed in parts of Slovenia and Voivodina by peasant attacks on the castles of rich estate-owners; these were real *jacqueries*.)

In 1784, Transylvania was swept by a peasant revolt, and, as late as 1907, an uprising of Rumanian peasants in

Wallachia had to be quelled by a hundred thousand Prussian-drilled troops of the Hohenzollern prince, King Carol of Rumania.

All the Raya uprisings against the Sultan were peasant revolts. The main burden of the fight for independence of the Balkan countries lay on the shoulders of serf-like farmers, of poor shepherds turned Klephts, Hayduks, Komitadjis. But when they finally got rid of the Sultan and the Hapsburgs, the peasant millions of Southeastern Europe, in their attempts to climb up to a decent human standard of living, collided with the stubborn resistance of the ruling clans and the hastily built urban classes of industrialists, bankers, and merchants, backed by foreign investors. Peter F. Drucker, author of *The End of Economic Man* and a student of Southeastern European questions, has analyzed the peasants' attitude toward capitalism in an article that deserves a lengthy quotation:

The Mid-Eastern peasant . . . is anti-capitalist insofar as he opposes concentration of wealth and tendencies to make money the yardstick for the whole economic life. . . . The industrialization of the peasant countries, and the invasion of finance capitalism after 1918, appeared to the peasants, therefore, as a brutal assault upon their hard-won liberties, and as exploitation fully as bad as anything done by their former rulers. The result of this clash between the principles and political and social realities of peasant Europe is the deep gulf which separates, not only the people and their rulers, but also the people and their state. It is a moot question whether the peasants in 1938 were worse off or bet-

ter off than in 1913. But it is certain that the peasants resent what they regard as treachery of their own rulers more than the ill treatment meted out by their former oppressors, of whom, after all, nothing better was expected. . . .

The [Balkan] dictators, with their retinue of court officials, officers, bureaucrats, bankers, and industrialists, are as much foreigners in their own country as the Lombard bankers were in medieval England. They have, therefore, to fall back upon one or two of the many tribal groups, with the result that there is real discrimination against the members of other groups. . . .

The overwhelming majority of the population being peasants, no government could maintain itself in these countries against their organized opposition, regardless of police terror, election maneuvers, and ballot stuffing. And in every one of the peasant countries, except Hungary, the peasant parties actually ruled for considerable periods. . . .

Since their fall, the peasant masses have had no share in the government and no influence in the shaping of their own destinies. They are a sullen, bewildered, and embittered opposition in their own countries, which are run on principles which, from the peasant point of view, seem to deny the rights and even the existence of the human being known as peasant.[1]

THE FUTURE OF THE PEASANT

The development of the present war has brought into its orbit all the peasant countries of Southeastern Europe.

[1] *Harpers Magazine*, April 1940.

Dynasties have been shattered, state forms have been broken. Foreign oppression has come to these countries in its most visible form, that of military rule. Under the weight of panzer divisions, of the Gestapo, and of the Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Rumanian vassal troops of Greater Germany, there may be a reign of silence in the Balkans, but it will be the silence of a loaded gun.

For every student of Balkan matters, for everyone acquainted with the mood and life of the peasant millions of Southeastern Europe, there can be no doubt that the Balkans will "come back" during the further course of this war, that they will play a most important part in its final stages, and that their role will be a decisive one in the new organization of Europe after the war.

For, as Drucker says: "If it is perhaps an exaggeration to say that the war will be won by the side which first offers a workable solution to peasant Europe, it is certainly true that that side will win the peace."

*

CHAPTER II

IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF POWER POLITICS

"Where big bells ring, little bells are not heard."
—SLOVENE PROVERB

Even in so-called times of peace the Balkans have been a battlefield of the Great Powers in their struggle for influence and position. During the eighteenth century, as the decline of the Ottoman Empire became increasingly apparent, the belief that it soon would disintegrate stirred the greedy ambitions of the other European Powers. In 1728, Tsarina Catherine proposed to the Austrian Emperor, Joseph II, a plan of partition of the Turkish Empire. In 1807, Napoleon and Tsar Alexander pondered a similar project. In 1833, the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor met at Muenchengraetz in Bohemia and discussed a secret plan for dividing the "remnants of the Ottoman Empire."

Internal unrest and uprisings shattered the structure of Turkey in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1807, the Janizaries revolted against certain modest reform plans of the Sublime Porte. It took twenty years of fighting to subdue them. In 1826, the Order of the Janizaries was finally abolished. This encouraged the separatist tendencies of provincial pashas, and the Sultan had to fight a series of pasha rebellions. In Vidin, Pazan Pasha Oglou raised the standard of revolt; in Yanina, Ali Pasha rose up against Istanbul; in Bosnia, it was Kapetan Hussein; and in Egypt, Mehmed Ali.

The Raya, the oppressed non-Turkish population of the Balkans, also rebelled. In 1804 the big Serbian revolt began. In 1820 the Greeks took up arms. In 1841 and 1842 uprisings swept over Crete. In 1854 the province of Epirus was in flames. In 1857 an uprising broke out in Herzegovina. In 1866 Crete again rebelled.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

From the middle of the nineteenth century on, European international relations were closely linked to Balkan developments, to the disruption of Turkey, to the rise of Balkan national states, and to the conflicts of the Great Powers over the Balkans. Tsarist Russia coveted the Straits and dreamed of a Russian-dominated chain of Slavic vassal states. Austria looked down the Danube to the Black Sea, and tried to prevent the Russians from acquiring control of the Balkans. England was possessed

by the idea of keeping every Great Power away from the Straits and of not letting any power get hold of the Balkan bastion that dominated the way to the Near East and perhaps to India. Toward the end of the century Germany began to build up her Berlin-Baghdad plan of conquest, and Italy and France fought for positions in, and access to, the Near East.

The Balkan peoples, on the eve of liberation, or already half-independent, made several attempts to establish a union or federation. The Serbian writer Garashanin—Minister of Foreign Affairs of the small principality—drew up a plan for a Balkan Union "free from the Hapsburgs and the Tsar." Consequently he was forced out of office by the joint efforts of Vienna and St. Petersburg. Back in office in the sixties he concluded pacts of friendship and assistance with Montenegro, Greece, and Rumania. From his "Program of Political Relations of the Serbo-Bulgars or Bulgaro-Serbs or their Entente Cordiale" a Yugoslav Empire was to emerge in alliance with Greece and Rumania. This plan was frustrated by all the Great Powers.

No, the Great Powers did not look with friendly eye upon these alliances. Although they had themselves fostered and continued to foster various uprisings in the Balkans, they were at the same time filled with a deep distrust of the revolutionary energies which they had often used as tools for disrupting the Turkish Empire. The fate of the Balkan peoples themselves was of no concern to the Great Powers. Help was given and withdrawn, ideals

were invoked and dismissed, according to the changing interests and tactics of each power.

The specter of the French Revolution was still haunting the memories of the state chancelleries when the Greeks rose up for their independence in 1820. The Holy Alliance concluded by the Tsar, the Hapsburg Emperor, and the Prussian King after the defeat of Napoleon, rested on the principles of legitimacy and monarchy, both of which were endangered by the Greek uprising. The English Crown in this case sympathized with the Holy Alliance. Had it not been for public opinion, stirred up by a mighty Philhellenic emotion, the governments of the "Christian powers" would have actively joined with the Mussulmans in crushing the Greek revolt.

Strange indeed were some of the ways of power politics. In 1829 an army of the Tsar, under General Diebitch, crossed the Balkan range to march against Istanbul. The Bulgarian peasants thereupon rose against the Turks in order to help the Russians. In the region of Sliven, a Hayduk chieftain, Georgi Mamartcheff, called upon the people for a general uprising, but the Tsar, having meanwhile made peace with the Sublime Porte, gave orders to General Diebitch to "point his guns at the Bulgars" if they "should not remain quiet." Four years later, the Tsar having by this time entered into a treaty of mutual assistance with the Turks, Russian troops were being landed in the Bosporus to help the Sultan quell an Egyptian revolt.

Metternich of Austria, the representative of the *Vor-*

maerz (pre-March)—the black period of reaction before the revolutionary year of 1848—rejected with horror the idea of using the uprisings of the Christian Rayas in the Pashalik of Belgrade in order to make territorial gains there. His "pen," Frederic Gentz, wrote in the year of the declaration of Greek independence: "The rule of the Sultan is based on the commonly recognized right of conquest and legitimacy." And when the Greek Klephts offered to come to the aid of Prince Milosh Obrenovitch of Serbia in his struggle against the Turks, Austria exerted strong pressure on him to decline "revolutionary support."

Strange also are the bedfellows of power politics. In 1837, for instance, Prince Milosh Obrenovitch, being in the pay of the Hapsburgs, stubbornly resisted the advances of His Majesty the Tsar of all the Russians. Thereafter, Tsarist agents encouraged the *democratic* opposition in Serbia, with moral and financial support, to make life uncomfortable for Prince Milosh. On the other hand, the British Consul in Belgrade strongly advised Prince Milosh to continue to rule in an *absolute* manner.

In 1853 the Government of St. Petersburg presented to London a project for the partitioning of Turkey. This was rejected, and England, with the help of France, Turkey, and Piedmont, instead waged war upon Russia in order to push her out of the Balkans. In the Peace of Paris of 1856, which ended the so-called Crimean War, Russia had to return Bessarabia to Turkey; give up her protectorate over Moldavia and Wallachia, which were

put under a joint guarantee of the European Powers; and destroy all her naval bases in the Black Sea. There is hardly a more absurd example of imperialist power politics than this war and this peace, which united Western Christian Europe in an effort to preserve the decaying Ottoman Empire, to cut Russia off from its own sea, and to defer the liberation of the Balkan peoples.

The order established by the Paris Peace Congress did not last long. The powers quickly came into new conflicts in different groupings. France and Austria quarreled over Italy, and Napoleon III flirted for a while with the idea of using Serbia against Austria and Russia. But he soon dropped this plan, preferring to obtain Austrian support in his differences with Prussia. Austria, more and more disturbed by the activities of her national minorities, now saw in the preservation of Turkey a means of curbing the development of nationalist sentiments in the Balkans, and therefore a means of diminishing her own internal troubles. At the same time, however, Austria sought revenge for the defeat she had suffered in the war against Prussia in 1866 and accordingly made advances to Russia. But Russia now wanted the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, not its preservation.

In 1867, the allied governments of Greece, Rumania, and Serbia were on the brink of a war to liberate the Bulgars, the Macedonians, the Epirots, and the Cretans. The Great Powers intervened. War was forbidden the little ones. The Porte was forced to grant autonomy to Crete, some concessions to Russia.

In 1875, a Bosnian revolt created new troubles for the Great Powers. Officially, all of them directed their consuls to intervene in favor of a restitution of order under Ottoman rule. Secretly, however, the Russian Consul in Ragusa, Dalmatia, sent foodstuffs, money, and arms to the insurgents, via Montenegro. And the British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte wrote to his Foreign Minister: "The Turks consider the conduct of Austria to be highly equivocal and open to suspicion. They are claiming that all arms and ammunition for the insurgents come from Austrian territory."

By that time the Austrian Government had made up its mind to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unwilling to grant concessions to its own Slavic peoples, it endeavored to preclude the possible danger of attraction on the part of a powerful Serbia by preventing the formation of such a state. On the other hand, it wished to tie Serbia to Austria as a safeguard against the growing Russian influence in the Balkans. This led to an entirely ambiguous policy of half-promises to Serbia, the bribing of the Belgrade Prince, and preparations for the military occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 1877, the Tsar again went to war against the Sultan, but in doing so he firmly refused all offers of the small Balkan States to join him as allies. When, however, the army under the command of Grand Duke Nicholas suffered heavy reverses after its early success, and when the diplomacy of St. Petersburg failed to make arrangements

with the other powers for a "quick carving up of Turkey," the Tsar grew eager for the Serbs and Greeks to join him. The former, however, were unprepared and discouraged, and the latter put forth excessive demands. Both were also under the pressure of Austria and England. So only a Russo-Rumanian arrangement was made. Prince Carol of Rumania became commander of the Russo-Rumanian army before the fortress of Plevna with the promise of kingly title and big territorial compensations.

Thereupon the British Cabinet discussed an occupation of Gallipoli. Queen Victoria wrote her Ministers: "It is not a question of upholding Turkey. It is a question of Russian or British supremacy." And in a private letter to Prime Minister Disraeli she stated: "To let it be thought that England will submit Egypt being under Russia, would be to abdicate the position of Great Britain as one of the Great Powers . . . and another must wear the crown if this is intended."

In secret negotiations with Austria the suggestion of a second Crimean War to prevent a Russian conquest of Constantinople was put forward. Foreign Secretary Lord Derby pointed out to the Austrian Ambassador that "The Russian scheme of creating a semi-independent or independent Bulgaria was a danger to the Hapsburg Monarchy." Simultaneously, the British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte was instructed to ask permission for his Government to dispatch the British fleet to Istanbul.

CONGRESS OF BERLIN

The Tsar, under these circumstances, hurried to make a preliminary peace with the Sultan. But the frontiers drawn in the peace document of San Stefano in 1878 were reshaped by the Great Powers, whose representatives met at the Berlin Congress under the presidency of Bismarck. There, England, France, and Austria united to prevent the formation of an independent Bulgarian State.

Britain took Cyprus, the Tsar got Kars and the Caucasus, the Hapsburgs occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina, France was invited by England to take the Turkish province of Tunisia, and France in her turn suggested that Italy seize Tripoli.

The representatives of the Balkan peoples, whose fate was incidentally being decided, had no access to the sessions in the ballroom of the Radziwill Palace in Berlin. The Serbs had to wait in the lobby. The Greeks were once graciously allowed to read a report and while they did so "the Earl of Beaconsfield (Disraeli) and Prince Gorchakov (the Russian Foreign Minister) slept soundly," as one of the Serbs reported home.

The French delegate asked the Rumanian envoy during a political conversation: "What is the name of the capital of your country."

"Bucharest."

"Oh," sighed the gentleman from the Quai d'Orsay, "Bukhara. I have some rugs from there."

And Count Shuvalov, Ambassador of His Majesty the

Tsar of All the Russias, remarked to Bismarck that Serbia —the Tsar's little Slavic brother Serbia—was "*une petite le cachonne*"—a dirty little pig.

The Berlin Congress did not solve anything. The great ones enriched themselves shamelessly; the necessary process of the liquidation of the European Empire of the Sultan with all its rottenness was delayed; and another necessary historical process, that of the liberation of the Balkan peoples, was hampered.

Help Save a Noble and Great People is the title of an English pamphlet, written at the time of the Berlin Congress by an influential Tory M.P., Sir H. A. Munro Butler Johnstone, in support of Her Majesty's Government's foreign policy. The people which were to be helped and saved, however, were—the Turks. The author of the pamphlet praises their "morality, politeness, education, and cleanliness." On the other hand, Sir Munro sharply attacked the barbarism of the "wild mountaineers who rebel against a legitimate monarchy," and "do not bathe."

None of the powers of course was satisfied. The seeds of coming upheavals were sown when the delegates of the Great Powers bade each other a hearty good-bye in Berlin. The Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, shook the whole Southern Slav world. From this moment on the Serbs became implacable enemies of the Hapsburg Monarchy. The occupation of the two provinces, imagined by the Viennese Government as a pleasant "dress parade," turned out to be a costly and bloody adventure. After the pacification

of Bosnia and Herzegovina riots broke out in Dalmatia, the suppression of which took nearly one year of real warfare at the cost of 30 million florins. Ten thousand Bosnians and Dalmatians emigrated from the Monarchy to Serbia and Montenegro. And for years after the "upheaval of Krivoshiye" regular military enrolments could not be carried out in the southern part of Dalmatia.

The union of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria in 1885 was greatly resented by the Tsar and by the Hapsburgs. But, when Austria instigated Serbia to wage war upon Bulgaria, Russian officers led the Bulgarian army. It thus became one of the first modern wars to be fought with borrowed armies. Or as George Bernard Shaw put it in his well-known play with this war as background, *Arms and the Man:*

Petkoff: We shouldn't have been able to begin fighting if these foreigners hadn't shown us how to do it. We knew nothing about it, and neither did the Servians. Egad! there'd have been no war without them.

Raina: Are there many Swiss officers in the Servian army?

Petkoff: No—all Austrians, just as our officers were all Russians.

THE TSAR'S TRANSDANUBIAN PROVINCE

The war ended quickly after the defeat of the Serbs. The Tsar, still resentful because of the "spirit of thanklessness and independence," forced Prince Alexander of Bulgaria to resign. When the policy of liberation from

both Turkish and Russian influence was continued by the Bulgarian Minister, Stambulov, the Russian Government first tried to bribe him, then ordered Prince Ferdinand, Alexander's successor, to dismiss him, and finally engineered his assassination. It was at that time that in official quarters in St. Petersburg Bulgaria was called "the Transdanubian province of the Tsar—*Sadunayskaya Gubernia Imperatora.*"

The contempt of the representatives of the Great Powers for their small Balkan pawns was always openly shown. The Austrian Foreign Minister, Freiherr von Haymerle, knew ten languages. Among them were Arabic and Persian, but no Slav tongue—in spite of the fact that he had to deal continually with the matters of Austria's Slavic Balkan neighbors. "It doesn't pay to learn barbarian idioms," he said in a conversation with the British Ambassador, and the latter "joyously agreed." Gorchakov's successor as Foreign Minister of the Tsar, Giers, once reckoned that the "liberation of every Bulgar has cost His Majesty 461 rubles, which is decidedly too expensive."

In the late eighties the Tsar frustrated a plan of personal union of Bulgaria with Rumania. In the late nineties all the Great Powers undertook "energetic action in order to restore the authority of the Ottoman Empire in Crete," which was in revolt. In 1905, a Serbo-Bulgarian treaty setting up a customs union had to be dropped under Austrian pressure.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 the Great Powers, particularly Austria-Hungary, played a most nefarious role. Italy had fired the opening gun for the allied Balkan States by attacking Turkey in Tripoli. With the Turks busy in North Africa, the moment for an attack in the Balkans seemed very propitious. The Government of St. Petersburg, which had negotiated the alliance between Serbia and Montenegro and Bulgaria as a weapon against Austrian and Turkish influence, gave its Balkan protégés the signal to go ahead. The war opened with the Montenegrins undertaking the first attack. In a swift campaign Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek armies swept the troops of the Sultan from the bulk of the peninsula behind the Tjataldja Line a few miles from Istanbul. But when the victors were about to divide the spoils, Austria and Italy prevented Serbia from acquiring an outlet to the Adriatic, and thus drove her into the Second Balkan War against Bulgaria. Both wars were used by Germany, France, and England as maneuvering grounds for their general staffs, who tested their arms and tactics on several opposing sides.

The growing imperialist conflicts centered more and more in the Eastern question, and so it was not by chance that preparations for the great conflagration of 1914 took place in the Balkans. In the outbreak, in the course, and in the ending of the First World War, the Balkans played an important part. Austria, Russia, Italy, and Turkey,

four of the six big European belligerents, waged the war in order to keep or to extend their imperial interests in Southeastern Europe and the Near East. One of the main causes of the collapse of the Central Powers was the desertion of the Slavic nationalities from the Hapsburg Monarchy. The Fourteen Points of President Wilson were principally addressed to the small peoples of the Balkans and the Middle East of Europe.

AFTER VERSAILLES

The political map of the Balkans was reshaped at Versailles, but in readjusting it, the peace-makers created causes for new conflicts between the Balkan States and between the Great Powers. The national aspirations of the Rumanians and the Serbs were fulfilled, but at the same time new national quarrels were created. Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Greece had within their enlarged boundaries new unsatisfied minorities.[1] The Macedonian question was left entirely unsolved. Bulgaria and Hungary were filled with bitterness and the desire for revenge. Economic unities were destroyed. A number of new customs frontiers hampered economic development. The contest for positions of power on the part of the great states began anew.

[1] Up to 1940, the status of the minorities problem in the Balkan States was as follows: 12.3 percent of the population of Greece belonged to national minorities; for Albania the percentage was 16.5; for Yugoslavia, 21.1; for Rumania, 27.2; for Bulgaria, 8.

In the history of the Balkans between the First World War and the present one there are three main periods. The first reaches from 1918 to 1933, the second from 1933 to 1938, and the third from 1938 to the outbreak of the present war.

The first of these periods is mainly characterized by the Italian-French-British rivalry in getting and holding stakes in the Balkans. In 1933, the new German imperialism appeared on the stage. In 1938, at Munich, the Western Powers surrendered the Southeast of Europe to Hitler. From then on the *Drang nach Osten* along the old Berlin-Baghdad road picked up fresh momentum, and, at the same time, the Soviet Union made its appearance in Balkan politics as a power factor.

In the first years after World War I, France built up its dominating position in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The Little Entente (Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia) was set up under French guidance, and a network of other treaties and agreements was woven as additional provision for the security of France's small allies against the dangers which threatened them from irredentism, revisionism, a Hapsburg restoration, or an *Anschluss* of Austria and Germany.

The French actions, however, aroused the suspicions and counter-actions of Italy, who regarded herself as the successor in the Balkans of dissolved Austria-Hungary.

Unhindered by Austrian-Russian or Turkish interference, her policy was to extend her patronage to the peninsula,

gaining in political influence and securing valuable markets for her trade. After 1924, by which time the Fascist Government was well in the saddle, this policy was pushed forward vigorously. France, however, had similar plans, and so for the pre-war struggle for predominance of Teuton against Slav, was substituted a Franco-Italian rivalry for political influence and commercial advantage. While France was successful, by 1927, in firmly establishing her influence in the states of the Little Entente by means of loans, military and cultural missions, and alliances, Italy secured a position, which, if not strong (except in Albania) in a positive sense, at least permitted the harassing of her rival by counter-attack at weak points, and the extraction, by skillful diplomacy, of a maximum of "nuisance value." France, on the other hand, became the principal guarantor of the peace treaties and the *status quo,* and, in consequence, the natural patron and defender of the Little Entente—thus furthering her policy of encirclement of Germany. Italy, on the other hand, frustrated in the attempt to establish her patronage over these same states, and bitter at the way in which her territorial claims had been ignored,[1] became, after 1937, with Germany, the principal sponsor of revisionism in Europe. As a result, Italy succeeded in associating with herself Albania, Hungary, and Bulgaria.[2]

[1] In order to win Italy over to their side, Great Britain and France had promised her in the secret treaty of 1915, besides the territories of South Tyrol, Istria, and Trieste, also a substantial part of Dalmatia, incuding the islands, a protectorate in Albania, and large territories in Asia Minor and Africa.

[2] *South-Eastern Europe, a Political and Economic Survey,* prepared by the Information Department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London. The picture drawn by the R.I.I.A. is not quite complete, how-

At the same time, Mussolini, whose precarious political, economic, and international situation had been bolstered by abundant British support, tightened his connections with Macedonian and Croatian terrorist organizations which had for their aim the disruption of Yugoslavia.

ECONOMIC CONTROLS

The great economic crisis of the late twenties and early thirties shattered the economy of all the Balkan countries. The Western Powers, instead of giving support to the seriously dislocated agricultural economy of the European Southeast, took advantage of the situation to extend their financial and industrial hegemony.

British, French, American, and Dutch capital led in the control and exploitation of Rumania's main industry; only 15 percent of the oil industry was in the hands of native investors. In the metallurgical industry German and British investments were about equally strong (22 percent each). Belgian capital almost monopolized power plants and electric trams. Forty percent of the capital invested in timber production came from Italy, and 90 percent of all the foreign shares of Rumanian banks were in the hands of the City of London. Foreign capital in other branches—French in glass, textiles, and gold min-

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ever, since it omits the role played by England during this period. The admission, for instance, that "good relations were also established for a time (1926-32) with Turkey and Greece. . . . During this period Italian relations with Great Britain were cordial," is definitely too modest.

ing; Belgian in coal; German, Swiss, and Hungarian in chemical plants—was relatively insignificant.

In Yugoslavia six billion dinars of foreign investments were, at the end of 1938, divided as follows: Britain had the lead with 1190 millions; then followed Germany with 1270, France with 1150, Switzerland with 750, America with 500, and Italy with 450. The French concentrated their investments in the copper, lead, silver, aluminum, and coal mines. Anglo-American capital was invested in refineries, electric generating plants, gold mining, and radio industries. The Germans led in textiles and chemicals, and, together with the British, in wagons and arms. Krupp and Vickers jointly operated a big armament plant, which—up to 1941—divided the output fraternally between the two belligerent parties.

In Greece two-thirds of all foreign investments were British (electricity, transport, shipping, telegraph, and banking). France came second with interests in banking, port facilities, gas, and mines. American investments were in utilities.

Of Bulgaria's industry and banking 42.6 percent was in foreign hands. Investments from abroad were largest in banking, cement, textiles, electricity, sugar industries, insurance, and transport. Foreign capital interests were distributed as follows: Belgian, 27.5 percent; Swiss, 23.3 percent; German, 13.4 percent; French, 11.4 percent; American, 10.9 percent; Italian, 9.9 percent; British, 1.4 percent.

Foreign exploitation reached a very high level in the

late twenties. Yields of 30 to 40 percent on foreign investments were usual. Several international conferences, called to find some means of escape for the Southeastern States from the depression of the late twenties and early thirties, failed miserably.

Economic plans, whether for *Anschluss* or for Danubian co-operation, were thwarted by one group or the other for political motives. As a result, the year 1933 found Southeastern Europe hopelessly divided against itself, disillusioned, or cynical, as a result of prospective failure of the disarmament conferences, and confronted by yet another problem in the shape of a resurgent National Socialist Germany. The failure of the World Economic Conference in July 1933 may also be added to this list of disappointments.[1]

HITLER OPENS A NEW CHAPTER

Hitler's rise to power opened a new chapter in Balkan history. The growing aggressiveness of German foreign policy, the disintegration of the League of Nations, the aftermath of the economic crisis, with its stoppage of loans from abroad—all this put the Balkans into a state of alarm and insecurity.

In February 1934 the Balkan Entente was set up. Greece, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Turkey signed non-aggression pacts, but the new creation remained truncated, with Bulgaria refusing to adhere, and Albania not even being asked to join.

[1] *The London and Cambridge Economic Service*, June 1939.

The French system of alliances began to disintegrate. The efforts of the Soviet Union to bring about a system of collective security failed. The Saar was given to Hitler. In the beginning of 1935 Laval went to Rome and gave Mussolini the go-ahead signal in Ethiopia. Sanctions were sabotaged and finally abandoned by the Western Democracies. Belgium slipped out of her alliance with France. Great Britain helped Nazi Germany to a navy by concluding with her (without consulting allied nations) the naval agreement of 1936. The ill-famed non-intervention policy in favor of fascist aggression in Spain began. The European Southeast, trembling under the blows of this political earthquake, hastily took stock of the changed and changing situation. In the fall of 1936, the Little Entente, though formally continuing to exist, freed every member from any binding obligation to mutual assistance in the event of attack, and allowed individual bilateral agreements.

A short time before the practical death of the Little Entente, the strongest supporter of a French orientation in the Balkans, Titulescu, had been forced out of office by King Carol of Rumania, who smoothly shifted one foot out of the Franco-British camp and into that of the new Italo-German fellowship.

In 1937, the Balkan Entente was practically destroyed by Yugoslavia's conclusion of a bilateral pact with Bulgaria without consultation with either Greece or Turkey.

The fate of the Balkan States was sealed at Munich, when Britain and France, in a last attempt to divert Hitler

to the East, yielded up their traditional policy of a balance of power on the Continent. They not only gave the Third Reich a free hand in Czechoslovakia, but also, as the future showed, forfeited the existence of many other states, from Scandinavia down to the Balkans.

CHAPTER 12

"With Nordic Guile and Iron Force": HITLER'S POLICY IN THE BALKANS

"The Balkans must be united with Greater Germany in a firm federation in various forms of semi or apparent sovereignty, economically or militarily, affiliated to Germany."

—ALFRED ROSENBERG, CHIEF OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY OF GERMANY—1939

"A handful of force is better than a bag full of right."

—DEUTSCHE JUSTIZ, OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, BERLIN

It will be desirable for a German Empire to possess the mouths of her rivers, especially the Danube." This was written in 1844, in a not too important newspaper, the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, in an article by a not too important Prussian officer. His name was Hellmut

von Moltke, and he later played an important role in building the First Reich both before and after its founding in 1871. In his article Moltke foresaw the outline of an empire including Wallachia, Moldavia, and Bessarabia.

1844, the year in which Moltke's article was written, was the year of the birth of an important man whose name is unknown to most people outside Germany and perhaps even within his native country, Friedrich Ratzel. This man was the father of a new "science," *Geopolitik*, which today is highly honored in Nazi circles, and which provides a good deal of the material for the foreign political slogans and programs of Hitler, Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Ribbentrop. It was Friedrich Ratzel who first pointed out the political values of space, *Lebensraum:* "Every people has to be educated up from smaller to larger space conceptions, and the process has to be repeated again and again to prevent the people from sinking back into the old small space conceptions."

When Ratzel died in 1904, the Wilhelmian Empire had just set out on its southeastern drive along the Berlin-Baghdad line.

BERLIN-BAGHDAD

Shortly after the unification of Germany in 1871 the powerful Deutsche Bank organized a new Turkish railroad company in Anatolia. Britain, eager to thwart the designs of the Tsarist foreign policy in the Near East, helped the German bank to obtain a concession from the

Turkish Government for the construction of a railroad from Istanbul to Baghdad. But it took thirty years of dickering before the concession agreement was ratified in 1903, the British having become more and more suspicious and afraid of the new German competition in the fight for world power.

The Wilhelmian project of the Berlin-Baghdad railroad followed the plan of a German World Empire along the so-called Eurasian Axis. This axis, running from Hamburg to Istanbul and Basra on the Persian Gulf, is the shortest land route between the North Sea and the Indian Ocean. It traverses two of the richest oil deposits in Rumania and Iraq, and some of the best wheat-producing and cattle-raising territories of the European Southeast and Asia Minor. Colonel E. Moravec, an authority on strategy, formerly of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak Army and now a guest professor at the Berlin Military Academy, wrote a few years ago: "The ideal of the German strategy of power is the conquest of the Eurasian Axis . . . Germany's push along this axis to the Indian Ocean was stalled for twenty years in 1918. Today it is resumed."

Wilhelm's project came to an end in the ruins of 1918. But with the emergence of the Third Reich and its growing armaments and prestige, gained thanks to the weakness and connivance of the Western Powers in their desire to find a "sword against the Bolsheviks," the old pan-Germanic plan of imperial conquest in the Southeast was again resuscitated.

Rudolf Hess, who was born in Egypt and who was deputy leader of the Nazi Party up to the time of his dramatic descent from the skies on Scotland in May 1941, especially favored all plans for the conquest of the Near East. He sponsored the new airlines opened in 1938 and 1939, from Berlin via Athens to Baghdad.

His old friend, Colonel Hans Rohde, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Berlin-Baghdad railroad project was appointed in 1938 military attaché of the Reich in Iran.

Pointing to the European Southeast, Asia Minor, and part of Africa, Hitler proclaimed: "There are immense areas of unused land which only await the cultivator. They are not set aside by nature for a certain nation or race as reserve areas for the future. This soil is for that people which is strong enough to seize it and industrious enough to cultivate it. Nature knows no political boundaries. First she places life on this globe, and then watches the free interplay of forces. Then the strongest in courage and industry, as her favorite, is given the right to be Lord of existence."

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF NAZI CONQUEST

The policy followed by the Third Reich in the Balkans had four main aspects. It worked, first, through various indigenous fascist movements and revisionist groups. Secondly, it used the German minorities as a tool. Thirdly, it sought energetically to make the Balkan coun-

tries dependent on the Reich through economic action. Finally, it utilized the reactionary trend in British and French foreign policy which opened the way to Hitler for great inroads in the Southeast.

At Munich, the Western Powers surrendered to Hitler their strongest Central European position, Czechoslovakia. But as though that were not enough, a few weeks later the French Ambassador in Germany, Coulondre, in summing up a number of interviews with Ribbentrop, advised that, inasmuch as the eastward drive of the Third Reich was scheduled for the next spring, it would be well to give Hitler a free hand in the remainder of Czechoslovakia in order to grant him "the necessary maneuvering space." The Franco-German Non-Aggression Pact, and the negotiations of Sir Nevile Henderson and Sir Horace Wilson with Ribbentrop and Hitler, were in line with this advice.

RUMANIA—FIRST STEPPING STONE

Hitler made prompt use of the green light. On February 24, 1939, he drew Hungary into the Axis. On March 15, he established a Protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia and took Slovakia under his protection. The next stepping stone in Southeastern Europe was Rumania. There the fascist groups had pressed for several years for an orientation towards Berlin and Rome. The Iron Guard, the Rumanian Front of Vaida-Voëvod, the National Christian Party of Goga and Cuza, and the National Cor-

poratists League of Manoilescu, all drew their financial support from Berlin. The strong German minority in Transylvania was tightly organized in the same manner as the Henlein Party in the Sudeten territory of Czechoslovakia.

The first Nazi organization, NEDR (*Nationale Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen Rumäniens*—National Renaissance of the Germans of Rumania), was disbanded after the assassination by members of the Iron Guard of Prime Minister Duca. But immediately thereafter a new German party, the Deutsch-Rumänische Volkspartei (German-Rumanian People's Party), was set up. In addition, a *Kulturbund* and many other "fraternal organizations" operated under the supervision of Dr. Fabricius,[1] representative of the Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland, the central organization for Nazi activities abroad situated in Stuttgart.

King Carol, although in a personal feud with one of the fascist groups, the Iron Guard, had been driven toward the Axis by the simple fact that he had established and kept his dictatorship through fascist methods. One week after Hitler's march into Prague, Carol signed a new German-Rumanian trade agreement, giving Germany an almost complete monopoly on Rumanian foreign trade.

Under this agreement Rumania had to intensify her production of fodder, oleaginous plants, and soya beans for the Reich. Timber production was to be developed,

[1] Not to be confounded with Major Fabricius, military attaché in Belgrade.

and measures were taken for the scientific exploitation of forests. Mixed Rumanian-German companies had to be established for the exploitation of minerals in the Dobrudja and Banat regions. German machinery was to be provided for Rumanian mines. Finally, provision was made for collaboration in all industrial and financial spheres, and for delivery of new and greater quantities of oil to Germany.

Besides political pressure, Hitler could bring to bear the heavy weight of economic factors. The percentage of the Rumanian imports that came from Germany had risen from 23.6 in 1932, to 48.5 in 1938. The percentage of Rumanian exports that went to Germany had risen from 12.5 to 35.9. Rumania had a big clearing balance to her credit at the Reichsbank, and Germany did not give Rumania any free exchange. Rumanian credit was used to purchase German supplies of certain "colonial products," armaments, industrial commodities, and machinery.

YUGOSLAVIA FLIRTS WITH THE AXIS

Yugoslavia had been flirting with the Axis since 1936, when Milan Stoyadinovitch, big businessman and friend of German as well as British industrialists and financiers, inaugurated his foreign policy of "balance between the Axis and the Western Powers."

The German minority, as well as the native fascist parties—Zbor and the Yugoslav Nationalist Movement,

under the leadership of Yevtitch and Lyotitch respectively; and later the Blue Shirts of Stoyadinovitch—received financial support from the Reich and supported the Reich's policy. As in other countries a Kulturbund for the German minority was founded in Yugoslavia under directions coming from Berlin. In 1938 this organization numbered about 160,000 members out of a total German population of 550,000. The activities of the Nazis in Yugoslavia were planned and directed by Consul-General F. Neuhausen and Major Fabricius, military attaché at Belgrade. German aid was also extended to native fascist groups to such an extent that even the kerchiefs of the uniforms for the Blue Shirt Youth Movement, Yugoras, were supplied by German factories. *Vreme*, Stoyadinovitch's big daily, was supplied with paper from the plants of Hitler's *Voelkischer Beobachter*. That neither uniforms nor paper was paid for goes without saying. Threads were also spun between Berlin and the Croatian opposition within the country and in exile.

The first prominent Nazi leader to visit Yugoslavia was Captain Roehm, chief of the Storm Troopers, who was prevented from continuing his Yugoslav contacts by his sudden death in the bloody July executions of 1934. Goering made several diplomatic trips to Belgrade and spent his honeymoon in Dalmatia. Prince Paul was his hunting guest in Schorfheide and a photograph of the tubby Reichsmarshal stood on the writing desk of the dapper Yugoslav Regent.

The Belgrade agency of the German Lufthansa air-

lines became the headquarters for Nazi propaganda in Yugoslavia. A high-ranking Elite Guard official, Herr von Riesen, was made director of the Lufthansa office. A special society for the study of "new Greater Germany" was founded under the auspices of Dr. Thierfelder, head of the Balkan Department of the Propaganda Division of the Brown House, Nazi headquarters in Munich. This society, Jugoslavenska Akcija, put out an endless stream of folders, books, papers, and pamphlets.

Early in 1938, Prime Minister Stoyadinovitch visited Berlin and shortly afterwards Munich. On this occasion an agreement of "technical union" was concluded, giving Germany an all-important position in Yugoslav economy.

The preparatory trade maneuvers of the Reich began with heavy purchases in 1936. Whereas, in 1935, Germany had taken only 15 percent of Yugoslav exports and supplied about the same percentage of its imports, by 1938 these percentages had jumped to nearly 50 in both cases.

German capital in Yugoslavia, which two or three years before had been negligible, amounted, in 1938, to over 800,000,000 dinars, more than 10 percent of the total private foreign investment. This was only partly due to the German absorption of Austria and Czechoslovakia. German firms were actively seeking strategically planned capital footholds in Yugoslavia and especially in mining properties. During 1937 and 1938, ten new Yugoslav companies were formed with German capital represent-

ing 100,000,000 dinars. Germany also bought out some American capital, in particular the Standard Electric Company, a Franco-American concern which controlled most of the power plants.

BULGARIA SELLS TOBACCO AND POLITICIANS

In Bulgaria there was no German minority, nor was there the possibility of arousing much of the anti-Semitic feeling which had helped Hitler so much in both Rumania and Yugoslavia. On the other hand, revisionist sentiment ran high in influential political circles, and was cleverly used by Axis diplomacy. King Boris, like the other royal dictators, had naturally sympathized with the fascist powers. In addition, there were two fascist organizations —the National Socialist Party headed by Professor Tsankoff, and the Radnitzi also led by a professor, Dr. Kantarghieff—neither of which Berlin found any difficulty in aiding.

Bulgaria owed her emergence from an acute agricultural crisis to greatly increased trade with Germany. Before 1933, only about a quarter of Bulgaria's foreign trade was conducted with Germany. This proportion rose to one-half in 1935, and to nearly two-thirds in 1938. In that year the Third Reich took 63.6 percent of Bulgarian exports and supplied 57.9 percent of its imports. Through its Trade Minister, Dr. Funk, Germany proposed and obtained a trade agreement under which she was prepared to take all of Bulgaria's products at prices fixed in advance

over a period of as many as twelve years and to supply Bulgaria with all her import requirements.

The Bulgarian deliveries to Germany consisted mainly of tobacco, soya beans, fiber plants, and oleaginous plants. I. G. Farben Industrie, the big German chemical trust, in 1934 introduced the cultivation of soya beans, providing machines, seeds, and instructions. Furthermore, German capital acquired control of the textile and sugar industries and of several of the key banks.

GREECE FALLS IN LINE

In Greece, Hitler had no German minority to work on, nor were there any German capital investments to speak of. And though his sympathies linked General Metaxas to Germany, military, geographical, and economic influences linked Greece to the Western Democracies, particularly Britain. France and England were more firmly entrenched in Greece than in any other of the Balkan countries. Berlin spent large sums on cultural propaganda and archeological research. (Herr Bande, head of the Foreign Department of the Propaganda Ministry, and Baron von Weisenhof, chief of its Balkan Division, led several "cultural missions" to Greece.) And German trade agents were as noticeable for their numbers as for their activity. As a result, the percentage of Greek exports going to Germany rose from 19 in 1929, to 43.2 in 1938, and that of Greek imports from Germany increased from about 10 to 31.1 in the same period.

Thus, combining economic conquest with the use of native fascist movements and German minorities, advantageously exploiting revisionist sentiment and race hatred, taking stock of the suicidal policy of the Western Powers, Hitler stepped—"with Nordic guile and iron force," as Herr Goebbels put it—from position to position in the Balkans until in the early winter and spring of 1941 he had "peacefully" occupied Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, and overrun already shaken Yugoslavia and badly outnumbered and surrounded Greece.

CHAPTER 13

Unwrapping a Riddle:

THE SOVIETS AND THE BALKANS

"A riddle wrapped in mystery."
—WINSTON CHURCHILL

"The imperialists have learned nothing and forgotten nothing."
—IZVESTIA (MOSCOW), ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, A MONTH BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND

With every turn of the political and military situation in the Balkans during the last two years, the question has arisen: what will the Soviet Union do in these circumstances?

Hundreds of different opinions have been put forward to explain why the Soviet Union had to move into the Balkans, or had to refrain from making a move. Thou-

sands of articles, radio comments, and forum discussions have tackled the problem of Soviet foreign policy with regard to the most recent happenings in Southeastern Europe. In countless cases, the conclusion has been that the attitude of the Soviet Union was enigmatic.

But brilliant as Churchill's phrase, "a riddle wrapped in mystery," may be, it could be applied as well or even better to the foreign policy of His Majesty's own Government. This government has, for instance, continued to support Franco financially even while he has moved closer and closer to Hitler; it has prevented the bombing of the Rumanian oil fields even as their output fed those very panzer divisions which smashed the British lines of defense in Greece. Nevertheless, the enigma of this policy, as of any other foreign policy including that of the Soviet Union, dissolves when one considers its basic motives and its social, economic, and historical motive forces.

As for the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, we may dislike it intensely or wholeheartedly approve it; we may regard it sympathetically or critically; but, whatever our beliefs, we must seek its principal motives in the world of facts, not in the realm of metaphysics and mysteries, if we are to understand it.

There are, for one thing, certain basic differences between the nature of the Soviet Union and that of its predecessor, the Tsarist Empire. Old "Holy Russia" was a backward agrarian state with only about 22 percent of her territory economically accessible. Using colonial

methods of exploitation within her own boundaries she ran amuck for new colonial territories in Asia and for spheres of influence in the European North and Southeast. Among her chief instruments of conquest and administration were the "Greater Russian Nationalism" inside her empire and the equally nationalistic "Panslavism" in her foreign policy in Central and Southeastern Europe.

The Tsar of All the Russias had certain natural allies in the Balkans: these were the princelings and the boyars, with their tribes of administrators, generals, tax collectors; the Orthodox hierarchy; and a part of the ruling urban minorities.

The Soviet regime has entirely changed the face of the country's economy. Instead of a backward agrarian state, there is now a highly industrialized power with a mechanized and modernized agriculture. Two-thirds of Soviet territory has already been made economically accessible, while the economic development of the remaining third is in full swing.

With all its forces engaged in the huge effort of industrialization, the building up of a gigantic defense apparatus,[1] the creation of a planned economy, and the furthering of what the Soviets call their "construction of socialism in one-sixth of the earth," the U.S.S.R. has no need of a foreign policy of struggle for colonies and protectorates. It has plenty of foodstuffs and raw materials

[1] Defense, as Soviet strategy understands it, is based on the principle of an active dynamic warfare and therefore requires a highly mechanized and motorized army and a mighty air fleet.

within its own boundaries, more easily accessible and lower in cost than those abroad. Having abolished private property in banking, industry, and big estates, the Soviets are naturally bitterly antagonistic to those elements it has expropriated and which had been the main support of the Tsarist foreign policies in the Balkans. With the Hapsburg monarchy out of the way, and with Turkey changed from a weak imperialist competitor into a friendly nation struggling for its national independence, two more motives for old Russia's Balkan policy ceased to exist for her Soviet successor. Nationalistic Panslavism, too, lost all sense and value for the foreign policy of a regime which from its earliest days has denounced "the ideas of Russian Panslavism as thoroughly reactionary, because they served the interests of Tsarism and the Russian bourgeoisie in their policy of Russification of the Ukrainians, Poles, Byelo-Russians, and other non-Russian peoples inhabiting that 'prison of nations'—the Russian Empire." [1]

Lacking economic interests beyond her frontiers, and having no Tsarist feuds with the Hapsburgs to continue, nor a "testament of Peter the Great" (the drive for the possession of Constantinople) to force upon a Turkish ruler of the Balkans, the Soviet Union could afford to base her Balkan policy on the principles of peace, collaboration in a non-aggressive friendly manner, and cultural affinity. Foreign political relations, however, are never one-sided. The Balkan countries after World War I were

[1] *Bolshevik*, Moscow, May 1940.

more or less dependent upon the Great Powers in Western and Southwestern Europe, and thus the relations between Moscow and the capitals of the Balkan countries were determined to a great extent by the influence of London, Paris, and Rome on those countries, and by the relations of the Great Powers to the Soviet Union.

As a result of this situation, there were, for many years, no diplomatic relations at all between the U.S.S.R. and most of the Balkan States. Attempts to establish such relations, which were favored by the peasant majorities in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and even Albania, were frustrated either in their inception, or shortly after drawing their first breath.

BESSARABIA—THE ALSACE ON THE DNIEPER

There was, however, one special case—that of Rumania, the only Balkan State having a direct border with the Soviet Union. Soviet-Rumanian relations were strained from the very beginning by the Bessarabian question. For twenty-two years the river Dnieper was only a border *de facto*, a demarcation line rather than a recognized frontier; and for more than sixteen years no traffic bridged this line of separation. The "unhealable wound" was the name borne by this frontier in the Balkans.

Bessarabia was seized by the Rumanians soon after New Year 1918. The province had been earlier promised to Rumania by Kaiser Wilhelm in order to induce her to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers. At that

time the offer was "wisely refused," as the Foreign Minister of the last Romanov, Count Sazonov, states in his memoirs. This wise restraint was given up after Rumania, having gone to war against the Central Powers, had been forced by defeat to conclude a peace—a peace, incidentally, that was much more favorable and mild than that one granted by the diplomats and generals of the Kaiser to the Soviet negotiators at Brest-Litovsk. Rumanian troops marched into Bessarabia with the approval of the Central Powers, and at the same time with the connivance of the Allied missions operating in that area. Moldavian partisans fought the invaders but were quickly overwhelmed. By the end of January 1918, the occupation of Bessarabia was completed.

The Soviets protested and severed diplomatic relations with Rumania, warning the latter of the "Alsace on the Dnieper" which she had produced. The Rumanians themselves did not consider the occupation as permanent. On March 5, 1918, Marshal Averescu, head of the Rumanian Government, signed a protocol in which he agreed to evacuate Bessarabia within two months. But this agreement was never honored by Averescu, nor by his successors. The incorporation of Bessarabia into the Rumanian State was, however, not recognized by the Versailles Peace Conference. It was not until 1920 that Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and Rumania issued a joint diplomatic document—the Paris Protocol—which declared that the seized province belonged to Rumania. The Soviets had, of course, not been asked; neither had

the population of the "liberated and gloriously incorporated province of Bessarabia." Moreover, the Paris Protocol remained invalid even from the point of view of its authors, for it was never fully ratified by all the necessary signatories.[1]

Early Soviet proposals for a peaceful solution of the Bessarabian question were rejected by Rumania under pressure from Great Britain and France, who were convinced that the fall of the Soviets was imminent, and thereby sought to quicken this development. But the Soviets remained alive, beat off all attempts at foreign intervention, and consolidated their position from year to year. Greater Rumania—Romania Mare—therefore had to deal with her big neighbor to the northeast. A special conference was held in Vienna in 1924 to settle the problem of the Alsace on the Dnieper. The Soviet delegates proposed a plebiscite, arguing that "if the Rumanian Government really thought that the great majority of the Bessarabians honestly regarded themselves as Rumanians, and desired inclusion of Bessarabia in the Rumanian State, the Government of Bucharest could have no reason to fear the results of a plebiscite, or to refuse to arrange one." The Rumanian delegation, however, rejected the Soviet proposal "if only because the acceptance of the plebiscite project would provoke differences among the Allies which had recognized the incorporation of Bessarabia into Rumania."

[1] Britain ratified in 1922, France in 1923, Italy only in 1927, and Japan refused to ratify at all.

The Vienna conference failed, and the unhealable frontier on the Dnieper continued to bleed.

BRIDGES RESTORED AND AGAIN DESTROYED

The changing European situation, the emergence of an imperialist Third Reich, the increased weight of the Soviet Union in world affairs, and the deflection of the Western Powers from open enmity to more friendly relations with the Soviet Union—all this had its influence on Soviet-Rumanian relations. In July 1933 Rumania, together with Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Turkey, signed the Soviet Convention for the definition of the aggressor. A year later, on June 9, 1934, normal diplomatic relations between Rumania and the U.S.S.R. were established. The bridges over the Dnieper, blown up in 1918, were restored. For the first time in sixteen years, direct train communication between the neighboring states was resumed.

Negotiations for the conclusion of a pact of friendship and non-aggression, and a peaceful solution of the Bessarabian question, were under way when King Carol, preparing his desertion of the system of Western alliances and the principle of collective security, forced Foreign Minister Titulescu, champion of a reconciliation with the Soviet Union, out of office.

This was in 1936. From then on, Rumania's "new course" towards fascism brought an ever-increasing strain upon relations with her big neighbor. A special tension

was added by the constant deterioration of the internal situation in Bessarabia, where the Iron Guard and the Siguranza, the notorious political police, terrorized the Ukrainians, the Russians, the Jews, and the poor Moldavian peasants to an extent unusual even in Rumanian history.

"Bessarabia has not only failed to make any progress in the economic and social sense, but has gone back half a century during fifteen years of Bucharest rule," wrote H. H. Tiltman, in his *Peasant Europe.*

And Edgar A. Mowrer, well-known European correspondent of the Chicago *Daily News*, summarized his experiences as follows: "In Bessarabia, few peasants own land. They haven't noticed much improvement in public utilities. They don't recall the government's having done anything much for which they can be grateful, and the dwellers of squalid Tighina, for example, can look across the river Dniester into Russia, and see the red-tiled roof tops of Soviet model villages."

Between 1918 and 1924 no less than 135 peasant uprisings were recorded by the Rumanian authorities in Bessarabia. In the first decade of Rumanian rule, 30,000 Bessarabian peasants were killed in uprisings and by punitive expeditions. The semi-official newspaper *Rumaniaun* stated on July 31, 1933, that "as a result of the poverty of the Bessarabian peasants, 59,131 infants out of 94,699 died before their second birthday." The "Minority Statute," based upon the obligations emanating from the Versailles Peace Treaties, was extended to the million

Ukrainians in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina only in October 1939.

In June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded the restitution of Bessarabia and, as a compensation for twenty-two years of unlawful administration and exploitation of that area, the cession of the northern—Ukrainian—part of adjoining Bukovina. On June 28 the Rumanian Government evacuated both territories.[1] American and English newspapermen reported that, at the beginning of the Soviet occupation, large numbers of peasants, and a considerable part of the Jewish population of Old Rumania, tried to cross the provincial border into Bessarabia. As G. E. R. Gedye put it in a report to the New York *Times:* "The province's large Jewish population also felt that nothing could be worse than continued subjection to Rumanian anti-Semitism."

THE BALKAN LOBBY OF THE WHITE TSAR

In the early years of her independence from the Sultan, Bulgaria had been "the Balkan lobby of the White Tsar." Later, anti-Russian feeling ran high in the ruling circles of Sofia. The peasant masses, however, continued their sympathies for oppressed brother Ivan on the northern

[1] Bessarabia covers 17,000 square miles. Of the population of 3,200,000, 20 percent are Ukrainian; 12 percent, Russian; 9 percent, Jews; 47 percent, Rumanian or, as they call themselves, Moldavians. Northern Bukovina with an area of 6000 square miles, has a population of 500,000, of which 400,000 are Ukrainians, nearly 100,000 are Jews, and the remainder are Rumanians and others.

shore of the Black Sea even during the war years when Bulgaria fought on the side of the Central Powers. The peasant government of Stamboliski (1919–1923) established friendly relations with the Soviets. A Soviet Red Cross Mission resided in Sofia and organized the repatriation of tens of thousands of former White Guard soldiers who had fled to the Balkans. Negotiations for a trade agreement and a diplomatic treaty were under way when Stamboliski was killed and a fascist government put into power by the putsch of 1923. The Soviet Red Cross Mission was arrested; one of its members was murdered. Moscow thereupon broke off all relations.

Until 1934 Italy, who held her protecting hand over Bulgaria, discouraged every attempt to resume negotiations with the U.S.S.R. Even after the resumption of diplomatic relations, official Sofia was very cool in spite (or perhaps because) of the increasing manifestations of public sympathy for the Soviet Union.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, the Bulgarian Government sought to improve its official relations with Moscow. A trade agreement was concluded, an airline Sofia-Moscow was established. Soviet sports teams and cultural delegations found an enthusiastic reception in Bulgaria. In the Soviet-Finnish war the Bulgarian press and public opinion were, with small exceptions, on the side of the Soviets. When in the summer of 1940 Rumania returned Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria, cheering crowds gathered before the Soviet legation in Sofia, and the Bulgarian Government extended its official

thanks to the U.S.S.R. for the latter's support of the Bulgarian claims on the ceded area.[1]

When King Boris and Prime Minister Filoff showed increasing compliance towards Berlin's wishes to have Bulgaria sign up with the Axis, the parliamentary opposition, which in fact represented the vast majority of the population, demanded a "policy of neutrality in close collaboration with the Soviet Union." Mass meetings in all the towns of Bulgaria raised the slogan: "No pact with the Axis! Alliance with the Soviet Union!" King and fascist generals, big business and reactionary politicians, thereupon hastily signed up with the Axis and opened the borders to the Nazi Army, just as, in a similar case, the "capitulationists" of Czechoslovakia had done in the fateful days of September 1938 when one of them coined the phrase: "I prefer to be swallowed by Hitler than to be defended by Voroshilov."

Moscow made clear its disapproval of the Nazi occupation of Bulgaria considerably before it actually took place. Refuting reports to the effect that the U.S.S.R. had "replied by consent to an inquiry of the German Government concerning the dispatch of German troops to Bulgaria," the official Soviet agency Tass stated as far back as January 12, 1941, that neither Germany nor Bulgaria had

[1] The Soviets accorded moral support on the grounds that, "historically, the area belonged to Bulgaria; that although its population was very mixed, the largest group was Bulgarian; and, finally, that Rumania had followed a policy of oppression and Rumanification toward the other national groups."—"Bulgaria, Turkey, and the U.S.S.R.," Harriett Moore in *American Review on the Soviet Union.*

ever approached the Soviet Government with an inquiry regarding the passage of German troops into Bulgaria, and that such a move would occur "without the knowledge and consent of the U.S.S.R." And when, in the first days of March 1941, the Bulgarian Foreign Office notified the Soviet Minister that it had given its consent to the dispatch of German troops into Bulgaria for the "preservation of peace in the Balkans," Moscow bluntly stated that this move, "irrespective of the desire of the Bulgarian Government, does not lead to the consolidation of peace, but to the extension of the sphere of war, and to Bulgaria's being involved in it." Students of Soviet foreign policy, as well as Balkan experts, are inclined to consider this statement not so much a warning to Germany as a message to the Bulgarian people calculated to bear its fruits in some later period when the silenced and overrun Balkan nations will have made their comeback.

GREECE AND ALBANIA

Greece was the first of the Balkan States to establish normal relations with the Soviet Union (March 8, 1924). The government of the Greek Republic made this move without any conditions, following the British and Italian recognitions *de jure* but without the approval of these two powers, who in their relations with the U.S.S.R. sought to have their small protégé states follow the wisdom of "*Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi.*"

A Soviet-Greek trade pact, although signed as early as

1926, was not ratified until 1929, the delay being due to internal opposition and British diplomatic pressure. From 1929 on, Soviet-Greek trade and diplomatic relations developed smoothly.

Albania followed Greece closely in 1924. The progressive Prime Minister Fan Noli, the Harvard-educated Catholic bishop, conducted the negotiations. The first exchange of envoys, however, was interrupted by the putsch of Achmet Zog. Relations were not resumed before September 1934, and were again severed when Italy took over Albania in the spring of 1939.

YUGOSLAVIA—THE LAST

Nothing in the nature of the Bessarabian question stood between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union; nor were there differences over financial problems, such as unrecognized Tsarist debts. Nevertheless, it was not until 1934 that formal diplomatic relations were established.

The all-powerful Radical Party of Pashitch—the main representative of the old Panslav program in the Balkans—for many years blocked every attempt to improve relations with the U.S.S.R., in spite of the great sympathies of the people for a policy of Yugoslav-Soviet friendship. Prince Regent Paul, related to the House of Romanov, and on intimate terms with the officers of the White Guard armies which had found asylum in Yugoslavia, was also bitterly opposed to any friendly policy towards the Soviets.

Turkey, which maintained very good relations with the Soviet Union, tried hard to persuade Yugoslavia, with whom she had signed a pact of neutrality and friendship in 1923, to make a move towards the recognition *de jure* of the Soviet Government. Although the French Foreign Minister Briand, who engaged in negotiations with Moscow, also advised the Belgrade Government to take the step, the leading circles of the Pashitch party, the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, and the Crown prevented the move at that time.

The same factors continued to oppose the establishment of normal relations even after Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Hungary had established them between February and September 1934. It was not until April 1940 that the Belgrade Government, aware of the dangerous situation of a Yugoslavia facing ever-increasing German demands, hastily sent a delegation to Moscow and signed a trade agreement. Resumption of normal diplomatic relations followed immediately, and was met by demonstrations of approval by the popular masses in Yugoslavia.

ELEVENTH-HOUR PACT

In the critical first week of April 1941, a few hours before Nazi armies invaded Yugoslavia, a Soviet-Yugoslav pact of neutrality was signed in Moscow. Although the pact did not actually prevent the spread of the war to Yugoslavia, it should be considered in a similar sense to the

Soviet rebuke to the Bulgarians for their consent to the Nazi occupation of that country. In concluding the Yugoslav pact, the Soviet Union evidently wished to demonstrate to the Balkan peoples her policy of peace and friendship towards the small nationalities, a policy basically opposed to that of the Nazis, which, as *Izvestia* had once remarked, was contained in the word of Goebbels: "The only instrument with which foreign policy can be made is the sword."

The demonstration of this basic difference, it is thought, will bear its fruits in the future. It was dramatically underlined by the sharp rebuke administered to Hungary by Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs Vishinsky, in his declaration that his government would not recognize the seizure of Yugoslav territory by Hungary, and in his added comment: "It is not difficult to realize what would be the position of Hungary should she herself get into trouble and be torn to bits, since it is well known that in Hungary, too, there are national minorities." Tending in the same direction was the prominent display in all Moscow papers of the manifestoes of the Communist Parties of Germany, Austria, and Hungary against the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia.[1]

The effects of the later Moscow move withdrawing the diplomatic status of the Yugoslav Minister, as a rep-

[1] A still more violent manifesto, in the same sense, of the Communist Party of Italy has been published even after the announcement that the Yugoslav Minister in Moscow was no longer granted diplomatic prerogatives.

resentative of a government that had ceased to exist, on the popular feelings in the Balkans should not be overestimated. There have been precedents. Dr. Z. Fierlinger, former Minister of Czechoslovakia in Moscow, wrote in 1940, after having been denied further diplomatic rights: "Let us not confound diplomatic moves dictated by certain tactical necessities with changes in the basic attitude of the U.S.S.R. towards our people. This latter remains an unchanged one of sympathy and friendship."

FEELINGS AND POLITICS

As a matter of fact it would be a great mistake to forget one of the principles of Soviet foreign policy, namely—as was said in one of the official Moscow statements—that the Bolsheviks "are the last who can be reproached with allowing their feelings to dictate their policies."

Soviet policy in the Balkans, as a part of its general policy, will be principally determined by the desire to prevent an involvement in the war. As Stalin put it in defining Soviet foreign policy: "War would be an unproductive waste of our means and energies and would distract us for a time from our fundamental work of constructing socialism." [1]

[1] The underlying principle of all the territorial gains so far in the Second World War by the U.S.S.R. is security, not conquest. Even "the war with Finland was waged on the Russian side only for limited strategic objectives. Its aims were not the expansion of the Soviet *Lebensraum*, nor the incorporation of Finland, nor even economic gain." Max Werner, *Battle for the World.*

To guard against self-deceptions and miscalculations, it seems advisable to look upon Moscow's policy with regard to the Balkans not as "pro-" or "anti-German," nor "pro-" or "anti-British," but simply as a policy dictated by the U.S.S.R.'s own basic conditions, interests, and perspectives.

CHAPTER 14

Conquered But Untamed:

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

"Better to be in a grave than to live a slave."
—SERBIAN PROVERB

"Either the Balkans will become Europeanized, or Europe will become Balkanized."
—OLD AUSTRIAN SAYING

Both before invading Yugoslavia and Greece and after having overrun both countries with panzer divisions, Hitler emphatically declared that he did not want to make the Balkans a battlefield.

We may, by way of exception that confirms the rule, believe in the truthfulness of this assertion. Hitler did not want to make the Balkans a battlefield. He certainly would have preferred to have Yugoslavia and Greece line

up with the Axis in a manner similar to the "peaceful occupation" of Bulgaria and Rumania, or to the "free collaboration" of Switzerland or Sweden.

Swiftly as war passed across Yugoslavia and Greece, it nevertheless disrupted communications, destroyed crops in the fields, disorganized mines and factories, scattered skilled labor and farm hands—in a word, it diminished the agricultural and industrial output of those countries which, under a "peaceful" settlement, would have continued to supply Germany with practically all their available materials and goods.[1]

The strategic assets gained by these rapid victories are certainly great, and so are certain consequences in the field of international relations. There are also, however, less conspicuous liabilities. In addition to the already mentioned losses in the economic field is the fact that new millions have been added to the vast armies of subjugated nations, conquered but not won over by the Nazis.[2] And there may well be other "minus values" in the newest conquest of Hitler, still latent today, but with inevitable consequences tomorrow.

[1] Yugoslav mines produced about 410,000 tons of bauxite or aluminum ore annually, 765,000 tons of copper (the largest copper production in Europe), 880,000 tons of lead, and considerable quantities of iron ore, antimony, and silver. Greece produced much less important quantities of minerals.

[2] 7,000,000 Czechs; 2,500,000 Slovaks; 3,800,000 Danes; 3,000,000 Norwegians; 300,000 Luxemburgians; 8,750,000 Dutch; 8,400,000 Belgians; 27,900,000 French (in the occupied zone); 13,500,000 Hungarians; 14,000,000 Rumanians; 6,500,000 Bulgarians; not including Yugoslavia and Greece.

At present, of course, Hitler has won a new victory and will certainly make the most of it. There is no point in underestimating this victory, in being victimized by wishful thinking or unsound prophecies. We should have no illusions about the possibilities of large-scale sabotage or uprisings under an unshaken Nazi regime. Nor should we, for instance, overestimate the nuisance value of Komitadji fighting in the rugged mountains of Central Serbia. But it may be said, in all sobriety and without illusions, that Hitler will not be able to solve the Balkan problem, and that the Balkans, now submerged under the Nazi wave, will emerge again and once more play an important role in the hour when the real "New Order" of Europe will be set up—in the final stages of the war and in the first phase after its end. What is the foundation for such an assertion? In order to get at it we must examine Nazi methods and plans for the conquest and reorganization of the Balkans in their "New Order."

HALF A DOZEN NEW MACEDONIAS

One of the most effective Nazi weapons in disrupting the defensive potentialities of the Balkan countries was the national question. The minorities were correctly called "human dynamite" in the hands of Nazi foreign policy. The Nazis have succeeded in shattering Yugoslavia and Rumania largely by means of using this human dynamite.

But their "New Order" in the Balkans creates half a dozen Macedonias in place of the one old one. Where formerly there were a million Hungarians under the foreign rule of Rumania, there is now a new minority of a million Rumanians under Hungarian rule in the northern half of Transylvania, which was ceded to Hungary under Axis dictation. By giving Carpathian Russia to Hungary, the Axis created a national minority of 600,000 Ukrainians, and by allowing Hungary to occupy the former Yugoslav Voivodina it created a third national minority of 600,000 to 700,000 Serbs and Croats. Slovenia, with a population of about 1,175,000 Slovenes, was divided between Italy and Germany. And Italy gathered under its wing an additional 250,000 Croats in Dalmatia, and about 200,000 Greeks in Southern Epirus and on the islands under her "protection."

The Macedonian question was "solved" in the way that the Bulgarian reactionaries wanted it. The biggest part of Macedonia became Bulgarian. It simply changed masters without getting national independence. And it may be remembered that there already has been a period of Bulgarian administration in Macedonia—from 1916 to 1918—with the result that Bulgarian courts-martial had to work on a twenty-four-hour-a-day schedule in order to deal with the flood of "Serbophile treason." When, later on, Macedonia was turned over to the Serbs, Serbian tribunals had the same trouble and often tried the Serbophiles of yesterday for "Bulgarophile treason."

THE CASE OF CROATIA

It might seem that at least one of the Balkan peoples was magnanimously treated. The Croats were awarded an independent state. But the story of the establishment of "independent" Croatia constitutes a classical test case for the inability of the Axis to solve the Balkan question. When they set up this new state, the founders had to go back to the Middle Ages to find the appropriate form. In short, all that happened was that a feudal crown was restored. And even then, History, with an extreme of irony, obliged the deliverers of the new Croatian Kingdom to avoid the memory of its most glorious king, Tomislav, precisely because his name is associated with the union of all Croats in a Greater Croatia. Instead of Tomislav, some other king had to be found to lend his name to the repolished second-hand crown of today—Zvonimir, who ruled unhappily for thirteen years and in 1089 left the kingdom to anarchy and disruption.

The man who was chosen—not by the Croats, but by King Vittorio Emmanuele, the royal puppet of Adolf Hitler's puppet—does not speak a single word of Croatian. But the Croatian peasants will probably console themselves with the knowledge that their new king will have nothing to say to them anyway. The glamour of the freshly acquired crown and the noble connections of King Aimone—he is a cousin of the Duke of Kent, a brother-in-law of the Greek King, and related to at least sixty members of European royal families—will hardly,

however, be compensation for the brutal injury to Croatian national feelings. For years Mussolini and Hitler have accused the peacemakers of Versailles of maltreating the national rights of the defeated nations. Now they outdo Versailles in their rape of the whole of Slovenia and of large parts of Istria and Dalmatia which have solid Croatian populations.

Not only is the new Croatian Kingdom a "severely mutilated veteran" of a nation; the new Versaillese in Berlin and Rome have also sacrificed every economic consideration to strategic ones. Thus they have deprived the Croatian State of all but one of its ports and have tied it to Italy, whereas all the trade routes and economic ties run in the opposite direction—toward the Danube and the Balkans.

BALKAN SATRAPY

There is no doubt about the ruthlessness with which the different incorporated territories will be Italified, Germanified, Magyarified, and Bulgarified. The Italians, on the second day of occupation, were already busily changing Croatian names of Dalmatian towns and villages into Italian. The Nazis put out an official language map just before the invasion of Yugoslavia. This map, published by Dr. Friedrich Lange under the auspices of the Educational Department of the Nazi Party, uses German names for a number of Balkan cities, "obviously deprived of their former German character." Beograd bears the Ger-

manized name of "Belgerad," [1] and Subotica is called "Maria Theresienstadt." In the explanatory text of the map there is the following statement: "The Croats make use of a Slavic literary language, but they are, as history teaches us, 'Old Austrians,' which means Slavonicized Germans."

In the economic sphere, the "New Order" of the German "*Sud-Ost-Raum*" is based on the assumption that the basic task of the southeastern countries is to supply Germany with foodstuffs. Therefore the program calls for the discouraging of all industrialization; existing industry is to be taken over by the Nazis.

Whereas the Nazis themselves constantly complain that they are a "*Volk ohne Raum*," a people without space, they will not be able to create an outlet for the surplus population of the Balkan countries. The resettlement of German minorities taken "home into the Reich" only intensified the overcrowding in other peasant countries taken over by the Nazis, as, for example, Western Poland and Moravia. The native peasant population was in part driven out to make room for the resettlement of these German minorities. News of this forced exodus of the Slavic peasant population in the occupied and "protected" territories, when it spread throughout the whole of

[1] "Belgerad," though not of course a strictly German word, is the form in which the city appears in the famous "Prince Eugene March," the old war song of the Austrian Army which has been made one of the official military marches of Greater Germany. It was to the strains of this tune that the German divisions paraded in the streets of conquered Belgrade in April 1941 before Colonel General von Kleist.

Middle Eastern and Southeastern Europe, did not awaken any sympathies for the Nazis.

PEASANT POLICIES

Moreover, the Nazis have allied themselves with such political groups and parties as represent the urban population or the Junker class in the Balkans, both of whom are despised and hated by the great masses of the poor peasants. The peasants themselves could have been won over by the Nazis only under the flag of social revolution, of land reform and collectivization. But in their entire peasant policy, the Nazis a long time ago buried all revolutionary propaganda.

As a matter of fact, in Germany itself they have created a "new peasant aristocracy" by means of the hereditary farm law, the *Erbhof-Gesetz*. Professor Sering, famous agricultural expert, noted in a memorandum to the Reich Government in 1937: "The *Erbhof* system tends towards the creation of a small village aristocracy. The hereditary farm law has reduced the right of inheritance for brothers and sisters of the inheritor, so that they are worse off than under the former feudal system."

After seven years of the enormously advertised Nazi settlement policy, the owners of large estates, representing only 0.8 percent of the rural population, still possess 38 percent of the arable land, whereas 90 per cent of the German peasants own but one-third of the land, with half of the owners reduced to tiny holdings and unable to live

on what their soil produces. The list of members of the Reichstag, all named by Hitler from the ranks of the Nazi élite, contains the names of the biggest Junkers of the old regime.[1]

The restoration to the former owners of big estates in the Sudeten territories and in Carpathian Russia has created bad blood among the peasant masses all over Middle and Southeastern Europe. It is quite characteristic that in Poland only the magnates, the Sapiehas and Patockis, favored Nazism, whereas the peasants opposed it bitterly.

The hardships of invasion and occupation, even if the latter is carried through in a "correct" manner, cannot but strengthen the initial anti-Nazi feelings of the peasant population of the Balkan countries. There is an old love for independence, and an old historical experience in the silent hidden fight against foreign rule.

No, the Nazis are not able to solve the Balkan question —neither socially, economically, nor nationally. But neither is there any probability that a second attempt to organize the peasant Southeast of Europe on the lines of Western national democracy and financial exploitation and industrialization could be more successful than the

[1] Prince August Wilhelm von Hohenzollern, son of the Kaiser and an old member of the Nazi Party, owns 240,000 acres; Count von der Schulenburg, another old member of the Nazi Party, owns 125,000 acres; Count Pueckler Burghaus, Elite Guard Brigade Commander, owns 100,000 acres; Count Helldorf, Chief of the Storm Troops of Berlin, is the owner of 3 estates, with 50,000 acres. Count Bismarck Schoenhausen, another Storm Troop Commander, owns 2 estates, with 45,000 acres.

first one undertaken in the two decades after World War I. As far back as April 1940, Peter Drucker, in the previously mentioned articles in *Harpers* magazine, pointed out that there was no constructive project in reserve among the Western Democracies, and that this "absence of any constructive program for the peasant countries" constituted "the weakest link in the Allied armor." As a matter of fact, French and British policy in the Balkans has always been linked with the same social groups and political parties with whom the German-Italian policy is collaborating. The corrupt Liberals in Rumania, the Pashitch clan in Yugoslavia, the Metaxas fascists in Greece, the bloody generals of King Boris in Bulgaria—they, and not the peasant democratic movements or the anti-fascist forces, were the allies France and Britain looked to in all the Balkan countries.

Nor would the mere federal union of the peasant countries, as is now often vaguely proposed, present a satisfactory solution, for these countries are by no means mutually complementary on the economic side. A customs union with the industrial countries of Central and Western Europe would not of itself be effective either, unless there were a total change of the status of "independent national economies" based on private initiative and free or half-free trade. And such a change would involve nothing less than a thorough-going revolution.

What, then, is the solution of the problem of Europe's peasant Southeast? There is no known simple panacea. All one may do in a study such as this is to indicate some

of the points of departure of coming developments, and to provide a few basic facts which must be borne in mind when the shape of things to come in Southeastern Europe is considered.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Southeastern Europe, overpopulated, peasant, poverty-stricken, is ripe for a great social and economic readjustment. The agrarian revolution—due since the days of the French "Convention" one century and a half ago, but sabotaged by the Begs and Boyars, by the Bratianu Liberals and Pashitch Radicals—must be carried out in the old spirit of the movements for the "liberation of the peasant," but with modern methods corresponding to the technical and social developments of the twentieth century.

The still existing remnants of feudal systems in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Wallachia, Moldavia, and Thessaly must, of course, be liquidated once and for all. But this is not merely a matter of loosening the grip of the magnates over vast estates; it is also a matter of a technical revolution in agriculture. Along with the hand-kissing, there must also go into the limbo of history the wooden plow. Machinery must be introduced in the fields on a large scale. Scientific methods must be applied to seeds and crops, to cultivation and planning. This is possible only when the peasants, who now live on holdings that are too tiny and poorly equipped, are united in

new forms of co-operative and collective work, and when their education is not made dependent upon the money they can themselves afford to spend on it. The living memory of the *zadrugas* and other forms of collective property and labor will smooth the way for such innovations.

The problems of national minorities can be solved, when the old conceptions of the nation and the national state are abandoned and every form of national or racial chauvinism is stamped out with uncompromising energy. A vaster unity, comprising the multi-millioned masses of Europe's Southeast and Middle East, and having the friendliest possible links to the industrial centers in the West and the East, will be able to grant each of the small nations and national splinters full cultural and linguistic freedom. Moreover, such a vast unity, without interfering custom borders, will offer an ideal territory for a large-scale scientific and technical revolution in agriculture. In close collaboration with the (allied or federated) industrial areas of Central and Western Europe and the Eurasian Soviet Union, there will open up unprecedented possibilities for the absorption of the surplus population of the peasant Southeast and Middle East of Europe.

As is implied in the above, every plan for the reorganization of the peasant countries between the Sudeten ranges and the Aegean must take into consideration the weight of Soviet influence in that part of Europe. And, whether we like it or not, the Soviet Union is destined to play an increasingly important role in the fate of a

Europe shattered by the gigantic conquests and death-struggles of the Nazi Reich, by the decline of the French and Italian empires, and by the vanishing of British power on the Continent.

The meager uncensored news that trickles across the borders of Hungary and Rumania tells of constant unrest among the peasants, and of a similar agitation among the workers in the Rumanian oil district of Ploesti and in Budapest. "Since the news of the expropriation of big estates in Soviet Bessarabia has spread throughout Old Rumania," reads a report in the Croatian newspaper *Novosti* at the beginning of 1941, "the hunger for land and the spirit of sedition are expanding silently but steadily like an oil stain on paper." And the Hungarian daily *Nepszava* reported in April 1941 that the visitors to the Soviet pavilion at the Budapest Exposition "plundered the big vases full of ears in order to take home a little Soviet grain," though the grain itself could not have been so very interesting in a country that produces so much of it as Hungary. What evidently was interesting to the Hungarians was the fact that this grain had been raised on *kolkhozes*, or collective farms; or, to put it in the sober words of the Budapest police reporter: "Several hundreds of visitors to the exposition had to be detained for making a demonstration in favor of a change of governmental and social institutions."

In Slovakia the German-commandeered government had to issue an ordinance forbidding the "discussion from the pulpits, for or against, of any kind of land expro-

priation." Behind the decree was the fact that the peasants in many parts had been asking if there could not now be a collectivization of the big estates since Russia was a partner in a pact with the protecting Reich and therefore "trustworthy."

An English author, reviewing the Balkan situation early in the spring of 1941, arrives at the following:

> Very large sections of the [Bulgarian] peasants are going communist. The left-wing Agrarian Party always was communist, and Sofia was a center of intellectual leftism. . . . It is evident that the trend is now much stronger, and is indeed gaining ground in the whole Balkan region among poor landless peasants who represent twenty to thirty percent of the total land population. Soviet propaganda is extremely well adjusted to the aspects of this group.[1]

Southeastern Europe is only at the beginning of a gigantic process of transformation. After the terrors of war and foreign conquest and after its vast experiences in misery, the idea of a "social revolution" has nothing of the frightfulness which it has for large parts of the population in Western Europe. After all, there must also be borne in mind that, reactionary as they basically are, the Nazis have, by destroying state boundaries, driving off dynasties, and shattering old authorities, laid the ground for revolutionary eruptions similar to those which were laid

[1] "The New Order in the Balkans," by Fabia, in the *Political Quarterly*, London, published by Keynes, Laski, Crossman, and others. January-March, 1941.

by the Turkish conquest and subjugation of the Balkans centuries ago.

Peasant Europe is a field in the late autumn. Winter has still to come with snow and storms, but deep underground in the bowels of the earth the seed is already growing.

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